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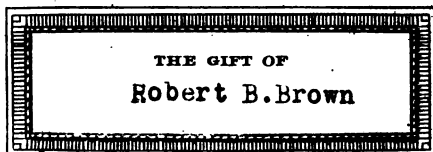
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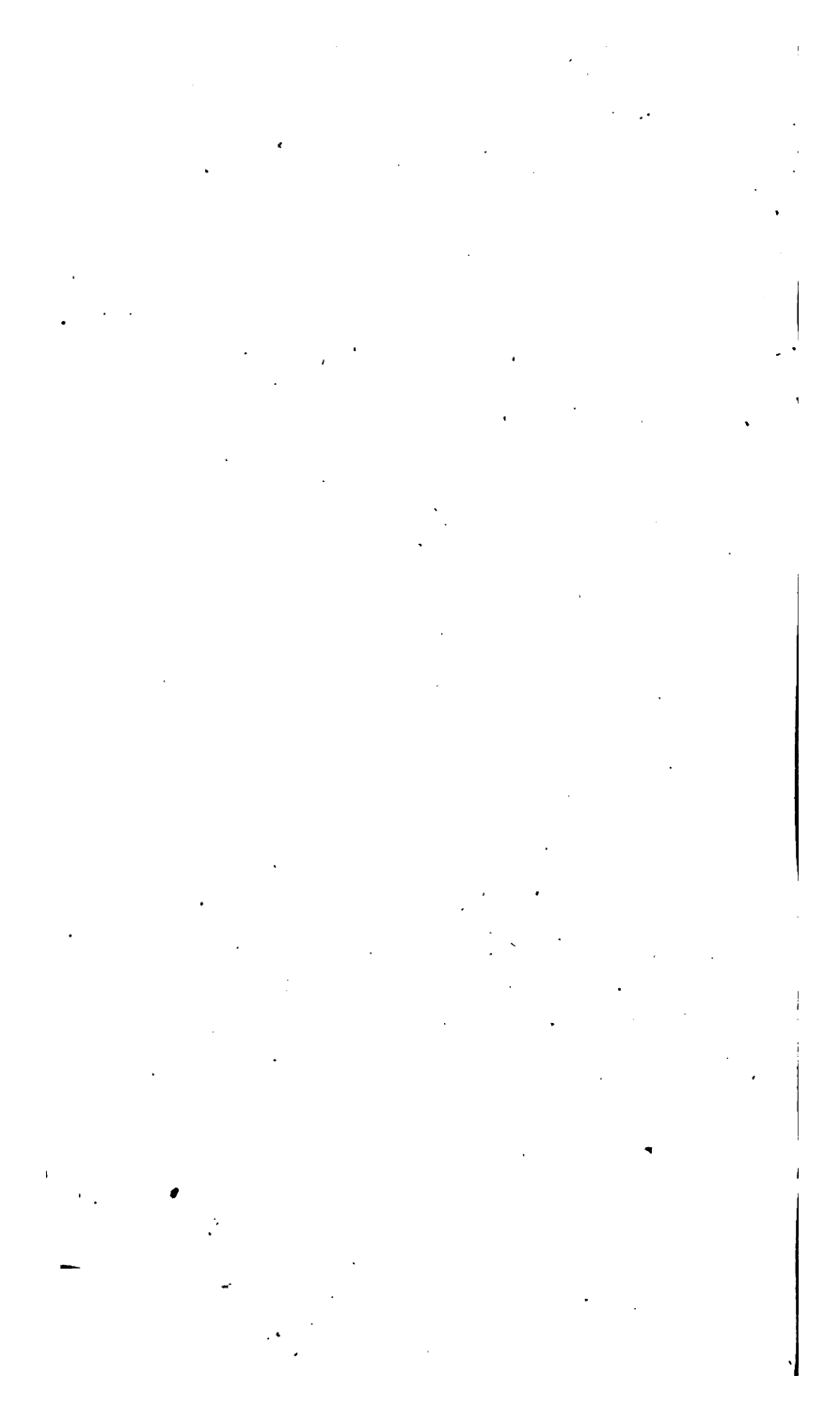
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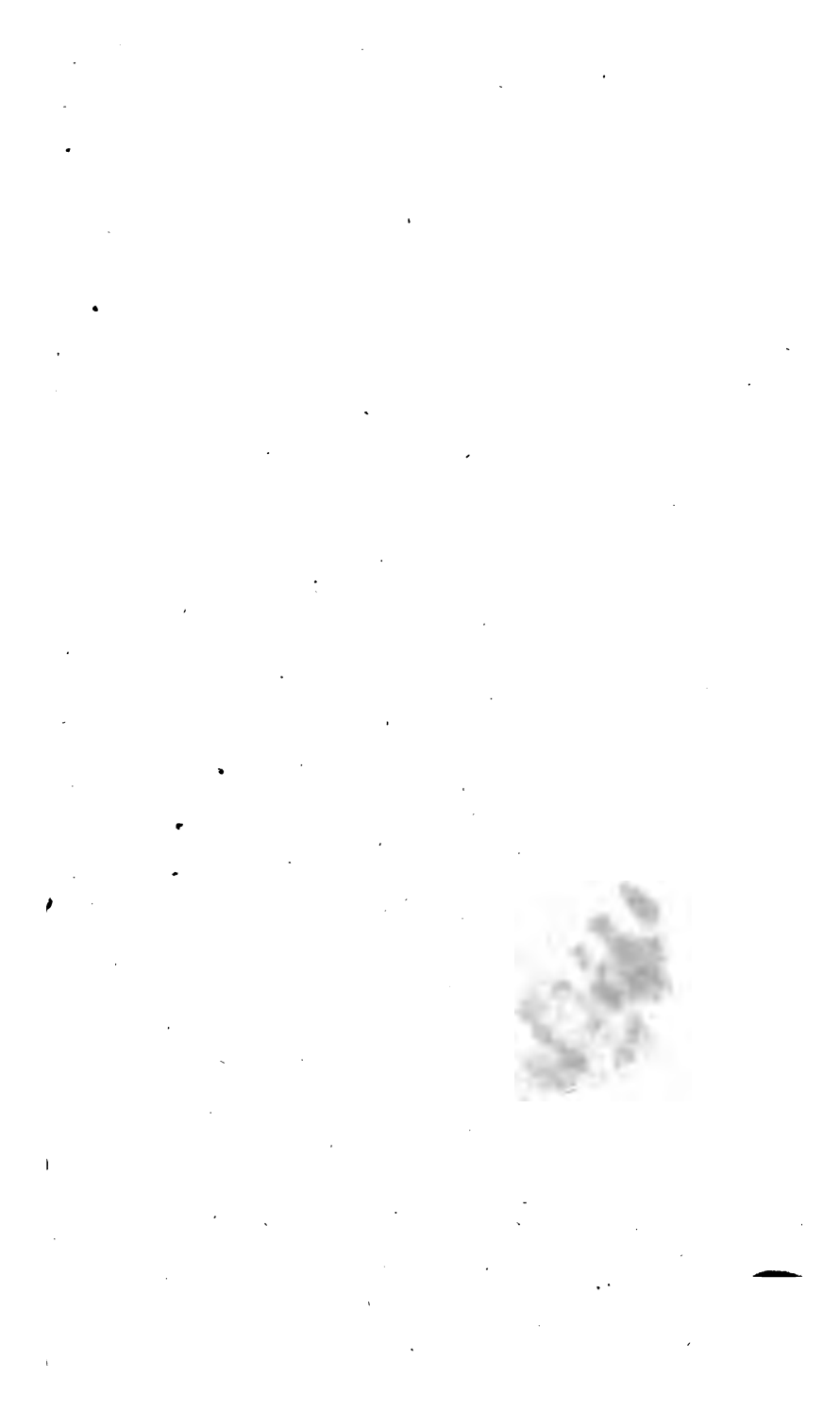
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*Pickering, Ellen*

# THE HEIRESS;

A NOVEL.

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"She walks in beauty, like the night  
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;  
And all that's best of dark and bright  
Meet in her aspect and her eyes."—*Byron*.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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## THE HEIRESS.

### CHAPTER I.

4-12-48 MFP  
"A dazzling mass of artificial light,  
Which showed all things, but nothing as they were ;  
The music, and the banquet, and the wine :  
The garlands, the rose odours, and the flowers ;  
The sparkling eyes and flashing ornaments ;  
The white arms, and the raven hair ; the braids  
And bracelets ; swan-like bosoms, and the necklace,  
An India in itself, yet dazzling not  
The eye like what it circled ;  
The many-twinkling feet, so small and sylph-like ;  
All the delusion of the dizzy scene ;  
Its false and true enchantments—art and nature."

BYRON.

Mrs. THROGMORTON'S ball on her son's coming of age was expected to be too gay a thing for any one to decline the invitation who had the power of accepting it, and at eleven o'clock the rooms were brilliant with handsome dresses, and lovely or at least animated faces. We will say nothing of aching hearts and aching heads, veiled by wreathed smiles and gay tones. Happy for us, in some senses, that the fabled ring, whose touch revealed the inmost thoughts, is only to be found in Eastern story ; that human beings have no windows in their breasts ; that every house is not a palace of Truth. Some few simple people may now gaze on smiling faces, and listen to the laugh, and the jest, and the repartee, and never guess

"That laughter is a veil that's thrown,  
To hide from every eye despair."

The kind-hearted may never imagine that envy and malice can lurk under soft words and gentle tones ; and the young and unwrung may dream for a while that the world is indeed the Paradise it looks. The delusion will end soon enough to pleasure even the most rigid.

Not that we think a ball-room either awakens or displays such evil sentiments, more than any other assembly. Those feelings and passions are in the human heart, and they may rule in the open air, or in the quiet parlour, as well as in the splendid saloon. There may be a spirit of pride and display in a hovel; humility in a palace; content in a peasant's hut; envy in a court; vanity under the decent grey and sober coat of the quakeress; and modesty in the splendid and elegantly fashioned dress. It is the heart and not the station—the mind, and not the circumstance,—that makes the difference. Yet is the ball-room an epitome of the world. How many enter it with high anticipations, and leave it with blighted hopes! and then what a jaundiced account do we allow ourselves to give of the “accidents of the hour,”—the rooms were dark—the people looked out of humour—the hostess was inattentive—the music was execrable; whilst we keep back the real cause of our discomfiture. Ask another. A soft light pervaded the apartment—all looked happy—the hostess indefatigable—the music beautiful; and this one also reveals not the real cause of her pleasure. And is it not thus in life? Our adversity, or our prosperity; our sorrows, or our pleasures; our prejudices, or our affections; do they not give the colour to our descriptions of what has been—the hopes of what may be? What office more thankless than that of given of a fête, if we pique our vanity on universal applause. To hope to pass through life unscathed, unblamed; to find the philosopher's stone, the waters of oblivion, or the sense of a madman, are hopes possessed of equal wisdom. But she who gives a fête from ostentation, cannot complain if the criticisms of her guests are withheld by no friendly feeling. The entertainment is given to please the inviter and the invited, and the former must not expect the latter to be grateful.

And such a fête was this. The lady, who had been a great heiress, availed herself of the excuse of her son's coming of age, to amaze the natives with her magnificence. There were four men to chalk the floors, six men to decorate the rooms, Gunter for the supper, Weippert for the music. Weippert and Gunter themselves in the country! As may be imagined, every thing was *déguisé*, from the anxious vanity of the hostess, to the chicken for the supper and the old Scotch tunes for the quadrilles.

Who could resist such a combination? Feet, which had been allowed to hope for repose, were practised to rival Mercandotti. Milliners and dress-makers, who had been on the point of giving up business in despair, were obliged to assume

the midnight lamp to complete their orders; flies had new wheels; chaises new poles; mammas had new turbans; young ladies new dresses; whilst papas, in the anticipation of pines and champaign, furnished brooches and chains. In short, in the words of the "County Chronicle," the rooms were crowded to excess, and were dazzling with an unparalleled display of rank, beauty, and fashion; in our own, the lady of the mansion in magnificent attire, orient with jewels, received her guests with a sort of splendid courtesy, awakening awe, ridicule, pity, or contempt, according to the moods of her visitors.

With no hopes or fears on the occasion, our heroine had nothing to prevent her enjoying the gay scene around her. We shall not repeat now, or hereafter the flattering speeches which met her ear, nor enumerate those who would fain have won her, for herself or her riches; but confine ourselves to the proceedings of those already introduced to our readers, merely stating it required more than mere natural humility to withstand the dangers with which such universal homage surrounded her. As if to make up for his delay on two former occasions, Mr. De Roos was one of the first arrivals, and after paying his compliments to his hostess, so completely did he succeed in engrossing Helen's attention, that after a more than polite bow to Elliot, and making room for him beside her, she paid him no more attention. Even the situation she had provided him was not long retained, for seats soon became a scarcity, and too polite to retain his when a female had none, he resigned it to an elderly lady who looked fatigued, and was shortly separated from our heroine by the crowd. And such a crowd! Even the elegant were pushed and elbowed, and gauze and blonde had cause to mourn the scuffle.

The powers of conversation possessed by De Roos were considered by his friends as almost unrivalled, and as that was a fascination which Helen rarely sought to resist, she was soon too much delighted to think what suspicions her interest might awaken. If his mind had not the depth and power of Dormer's, his conversation could boast of more esprit and brilliancy. The one struck, the other wooed; the one was the lightning that would set the forest in a blaze, the other the playful flashing on a summer's evening, among beds of brilliant flowers. Neither our heroine nor Mr. De Roos was a person of such insignificance as to be unseen, or unobserved when seen; and though his words bore no lover-like meaning, yet he conversed in so low a tone, and his manner was so earnest, that many agreed the heiress, if not already won, would not long protract

the siege. As usual! some wondered, some approved, some disapproved, and some few disbelieved. Miss Carleton on hearing it tossed her head, said she was sure it was no such thing, and shouldering through the crowd, disturbed the *tête-à-tête*.

"Gentlemen, will you lead your partners to the dancing-room, if you please?" said the lady of the mansion; and the young beauties prepared to look demure, and thinking of any thing rather than being asked for their hands, whilst the young gentlemen ran their fingers through their hair for the last time, and drew on their white gloves. The laughing glances of Helen and De Roos met; and saying, "I see I must make preparations," De Roos performed the same operations with inimitable grace, at the same time exhibiting a caricature.

"Now, Miss St. Maur, may I presume to request the honour of your hand?"

"It would be impossible to refuse!" was her laughing reply; and entering the dancing-room, they took place opposite Alford and Miss Throgmorton.

"What think you now, Miss Carleton?"

"That a gentleman never dances the first dance with the lady he likes best;" and with the usual toss of the head, she gave her hand to a young officer, and joined the dance.

The conversation and attentions of De Roos to his fair partner, were not less earnest in the dancing than they had been in the reception room; and they who saw were confirmed in their conjectures: but engaged as she was, she found time to speak to Alford.

"Where is Annie Grey? I am afraid she will not find Mrs. Roberts a very agreeable chaperon, and I almost wish I had been a mistress for her sake."

"If such be your wish, you need not wait long I suspect," glancing at De Roos. "Annie is in that corner behind the orange tree, shrinking like the sensitive plant, and heartily repenting having yielded to her grandfather's wish. She has at last promised to dance the next quadrille with me, and I have engaged you shall be our *vis-à-vis*; and remember, you dance with me the one after."

"It seems I have no option, so must submit to my fate."

The dance concluded, she sought Annie Grey, by whom she was most warmly welcomed.

"Alford says you are a sad trembler."

"Not when you or he are with me."

"We must be your defenders then; but remember, in return,



when your grandmother is better, I will no longer be cheated out of my visit."

"I love you too well; but indeed you will find me very stupid."

"I will run the risk," and introducing Mr. De Roos, with his assistance she made her friend forget half her terrors, till claimed by Alford, as his partner, with an embarrassed air, that told a tale he little wished concealed.

"How do you do Miss St. Maur?" said Mrs. Carleton, with even a loftier mein than usual. "This heat is intolerable! Some say it could not have been helped with such a crowd; but I say it might by a different arrangement, which I explained to Mrs. Throgmorton, but some people will never take advice. Persons think that is natural, but I say, it is the sign of a weak mind. I told her the other day, that her dairy-maid knew nothing about her work, and could not make butter, but always churned the cream into whey, and that I could recommend an excellent one; and she absolutely told me she left all those things to her housekeeper. If people will not be advised, they must take the consequences. Pray who is that little thing in plain white muslin, without any ornament in her hair?" staring at Alford's partner.

"Miss Grey," replied Helen warmly, "one of the sweetest and loveliest of human beings."

"I beg pardon. A protégée of yours, I conclude."

"A friend!" said Helen pointedly, provoked at her insolence.

"Oh, Mrs. Carleton! you know every body!" said Mrs. Johnson, a widow lady with a small fortune, and a time-serving son. "Can you tell me who that ugly man is talking to Mrs. Mahon? so vulgar! so awkward!"

"I cannot see him; but, from the description, it must be Mr. Elliott;" and she looked triumphantly at Helen.

"Who is Mr. Elliott?"

"I really know nothing about him, but Miss St. Maur can tell you; he is a great favourite of her's. Some persons call him and Mr. De Roos 'the Contrast,' but I call them 'Beauty and the Beast.' There are some strange people here to-night!"

"There he is!" cried Mrs. Johnson, pointing him out.

"That is Mr. Milton," said Helen, quietly, "a brother of Mrs. Carleton's. Mr. Elliott, though in ill health, is neither hideous nor vulgar." And, without waiting a reply, she plunged into the mysteries of *chassez de-chassez, traversez, croissez*.

"Now do you deserve an ovation for having put down that woman so quietly!" said Alford. "I wish Mrs. Throgmorton's dairy-maid would make away with her. Hear her telling

the same story over and over again!" and a moment's listening proved the truth of his assertion.

"What do you think of that young woman in white muslin?" inquired Mr. Johnson, the son, a short young man, with a good leg and foot, the only commendable parts about him, unless some might choose to admire an enormous pair of whiskers, nourished with great care. "John Carleton thinks she is pretty; and she seems to have a good angle." And he edged close up to Mr. De Roos, to whom this question was addressed, that he might be believed on confidential terms.

"Tolerable!" replied De Roos, carelessly; "well enough for a country girl: but she wants style."

"Exactly so! I quite agree with you," said Mr. Johnson, who never ventured to have an opinion of his own, till it had been sanctioned by some one of consequence. "And what do you think of Lady Catharine Alford?"

"Quite aristocratic!"

"Exactly so! that is just what I thought. Some fine women here to-night," addressing Alford; "your sister, for instance; something quite aristocratic; and Miss Throgmorton, a fine fashionable-looking young woman; and Miss St. Maur, with her distinguished loveliness. There are some others, tolerable. There is that little girl in white; Grey, I think they call her; she has a tolerable leg and foot, and is rather pretty—well enough for a country girl! but she has no style!"

"I know nothing about her style; but she has a very elegant gait, and is one of the loveliest young women in the room;" and he gave the little man a look which made him appear still less.

This was a dilemma poor Mr. Johnson had not contemplated. That Lord Alford and the Hon. Mr. De Roos should differ, was a misfortune beyond his imagination; and he would have dwindled into nothing, had not the bright idea struck him, of consulting a third person. Miss St. Maur was the most distinguished in sight, and to her, therefore, he applied. "What is your opinion of Miss Grey?" for he no longer ventured to call her a girl.

"What must be the opinion of every one of taste, that her beauty is almost more than earthly," replied Helen in a decided tone, well aware of his character. "Exactly so! I quite agree with you!" and away he went, to sport this idea as his own, to those to whom he might venture to play fine, and then say Lord Alford and Miss St. Maur agreed with him.

"I am in a passion fever," said Alford, on his return, "notwithstanding the ice I have brought you, Helen."

"What is the matter?"

"Why, that impertinent puppy, Johnson, vexed me, first with his insolent criticism; and then Mrs. Jones teased me about the beauties; and that intolerable Mrs. Carleton is calling De Roos and Elliott 'Beauty and the Beast,' because she thinks it a clever thing, and telling every one about your two protégées; and now I hope you are as angry as I am."

"Not quite! It is too hot; but I hope Mr. Elliott will not hear her. Have you seen him lately?"

"Not since I first entered the room, when he was watching you and De Roos, and, I suppose, thinking what others thought."

"My lord, you must allow me to introduce you to a friend of mine;" and Mrs. Throgmorton bore off her prey before the blushing Helen could receive or offer explanation.

"Dear me! not dancing!" said Miss Carleton, stepping back from the circle of waltzers, as much to show off a flirtation with a gallant dragoon as for any other purpose.

"I never waltz!" replied our heroine.

"Oh, no! you are afraid; it might make you giddy," retorted the young lady, concluding with a laugh due to the imagined wit of her speech.

"My reasons are too old-fashioned and too common-place, to be worth repeating."

"I forgot, you are so very demure! What do you think mamma calls that dear creature, De Roos, and his hideous companion? 'Beauty and the Beast;' is not that good?" and she turned to her partner for applause.

"Capital!" and both indulged in a loud laugh.

"I was in such a fright just now, I really thought the Beast was going to ask me to dance; and I would not stand up with him for the world; but De Roos says I may do as I like to Elliott, provided I do not refuse him;" and she flirted her fan, and tried to blush and look down. Then continued in a tone of affected pity—"I am afraid, Miss St. Maur, you did not find Mr. De Roos very pleasant; he says he is generally dull the first dance, when obliged to choose his partner from etiquette."

"I found Mr. De Roos quite as pleasant as usual," said Helen, smiling at the impertinence; a smile not lost on the dragoon who enjoyed the ridicule of the scene.

"Oh, did you! Well, I am glad of that; I was afraid you had not; but I hope that horrid Elliott will not ask me, for I have a terror of being the cause of a duel."

"I do not think you need be alarmed on either account."

"I am not so sure of that," in a tone of pique.

"Who is this horrid monster?" inquired her partner.

"Mr. Elliott! and he looks like a skeleton, and is sallow and lame, and so ugly;" and she made a movement of loathing.

"If you knew how he came to be so thin and so sallow, you would not think him ugly any more," interposed Miss Grey, in a very low, sweet voice, blushes spreading over cheek and neck and brow at the sound of her own voice.

"And pray how came he to be so thin, and so sallow, and so ugly?" inquired Miss Carleton, with a contemptuous stare.

Miss Grey paused a moment, confused and abashed; then gaining courage from the same good feeling which had prompted her first interposition, she answered the sneering question in the same low voice as before, and as concisely as possible.

"As Mr. Elliott was walking near a wood, he heard cries for help and the sound of blows; he rushed to the spot, and saw one man lying on the ground, and trying to protect himself from the attacks of three others. Mr. Elliott took the weak side, and wrenching a stick from one of the robbers, obliged them to leave the place, after receiving himself such severe wounds in the contest, that, when others came up, they found him insensible."

"A very pretty story indeed! but what voucher is there for it?"

Even Miss Grey's meek spirit was moved, by the insult, and she answered with dignity—"A letter from Miss Hopkins, the sister of the gentleman whose life was saved by Mr. Elliott's gallantry, and which may be seen at Marston Parsonage."

"A wonderful tale, truly! I will tell mamma the Beast has turned out a Don Quixote."

"If you merit the name of woman, you will better know how to appreciate a brave act," exclaimed the indignant Helen.

The young lady coloured at the rebuke, turned away abruptly, and, to hide her confusion, engaged instantly in the whirling dance.

"Who is that young lady in pink?" inquired Annie Grey of our heroine. "Scarcely any one speaks to her, and I fancy she sighs when she sees every one else dancing and happy; just as I should sigh, if you and Lord Alford were not so kind to me."

"It is Miss Mason, and I am grieved to see her slighted because she is poor and plain; let us go to her, and get Alford to find her a partner. He is above such meanness;" and, taking her companion's arm, she crossed over, and sat talking to Miss Mason for some moments, with a manner to show all that she

had sought pleasure to herself in the interview. Then, taking Miss Grey's arm, she turned towards the conservatory, thinking she should find Alford there. As she was delayed by the crowd, she overheard the following conversation :

"Who is that dowdy?"

"A Miss Mason! the daughter of a defunct country attorney, who did not cut up well," answered Mr. Johnson. "Her father was agent, or some such thing, to Mr. Throgmorton, at least I think Lord Banden said so one day when we were travelling together. Hearing this, I said, 'Well, to my mind, the marriage bonds of the daughter may be as galling as the money bonds of the father.' 'He! he! he! that's good,' said his Lordship, 'I shall remember that.'"

"Do you mean when you rode on the outside of the same coach from Reading to Windsor?" inquired Mr. Dalton, a sarcastic elderly gentleman, of whom more hereafter.

The abashed little man was saved the trouble of a reply, by some one saying, "Having asked her, I wonder Mrs. Throgmorton does not provide her a partner."

"That might not be such an easy job," exclaimed young Carleton; "gentlemen like to choose for themselves," arranging his neckcloth, and looking down at his feet as he spoke.

"For shame! no rebellion. Gunter, Wieppert, and champagne should command obedience to any behest," remarked Mr. Dalton.

"For any thing else?" returned Mr. John Carleton, not exactly knowing how to understand this speech.

"She looks so anxious to dance, I should not wonder if she attempted a pas seul," said another.

"Will you not take pity on her, Mr. De Roos!" asked the provoking Mr. Dalton. "I heard you utter such noble sentiments to Miss St. Maur, that I cannot possibly doubt your standing forth as the champion of the distressed. I think you said wealth and beauty were as dross compared to the ore of the mind and heart?"

"I have no doubt Mr. De Roos will when he hears that Miss St. Maur sat by her some time."

"I dare say Mr. De Roos will not think it necessary to patronise all Miss St. Maur's protégées," retorted Miss Carleton, with the usual toss of the head.

"You are quite right, Miss Carleton; and I own I have no longer the self-denial to delay soliciting the honour of your hand;" and he led her off, thus avoiding an answer to Mr. Dalton.

"Oh! man! man!" exclaimed Helen, half in jest, half in ear-

nest, as she passed on with her companion. "He prides himself on his superiority, boasts of his freedom, and yet in truth is the slave of wealth and beauty, and a thousand meaner things besides; the deceiver of others and himself; and oh, woman! woman! how clear-sighted can you be, when not blinded by vanity of love."

"Surely all men are not ungenerous, dear Miss St. Maur?"

There was a tremor in the questioner's voice, which made Helen look at her attentively for a moment. A smile succeeded to the look, and then a shade of anxiety. Annie Grey looked up for an answer, and then looked down with a blush, though she knew not and guessed not why.

"All men are not ungenerous, dear Annie, though I suspect there are few who do not overrate beauty. Alford, for one, would never slight poverty or plainness, though his rank and the wishes of his father will lead him to wed with rank and fortune."

"Do you not think Mr. De Roos will dance with Miss Mason?" asked Miss Grey hastily, as if to change the conversation.

"Will the moon give the warmth of the sun?"

"But he did not say he would not?"

"It is not politic to say things which may be repeated."

"Perhaps if you were to ask him?"

"He would do it instantly, and proclaim the cause to the world, unless he could plead an excuse sufficiently plausible to deceive me."

"I shall never understand things," said Annie, with simplicity; "but there is Mr. Elliott."

"Yes, he would require no bidding; but that must not be till Alford has danced with her. It would but subject him to more ridicule."

"I have not seen you dancing, Mr. Elliott," she said, a few moments after, whilst her admiration of his bravery imparted a more than usual kindness to her manner, or rather ennobled its character. "I fear you are suffering pain;" and she glanced at his foot, which scarcely touched the ground, as he leant against a pillar.

"Oh no, I thank you! I am suffering from no bodily pain, and my foot is so far recovered that I hope soon to lose all sign of lameness."

"Then you despise, or dislike dancing?"

"Neither; I am fond of it."

"And yet you do not dance! Have the ladies of our

county no charms for you?"

"The deficiency of attraction is on my part."

"How do you know this?"

"You are not acting with your usual kindness by these strict inquiries; it is absolute cruelty to force the confession that I have not danced because nobody will dance with me."

There was something so *naïf* in this confession; so perfectly candid and open, and so entirely free from anything like confusion or pique, though there was a slight tinge of melancholy in the tone, as if a feeling of desolation mingled with his indifference, that she was much surprised, more pleased, and answered, in his own strain, though with sufficient interest not to have her words misunderstood. "I suspect you of a libel on the tastes of our ladies, and am inclined to become their defender. Confessing the mortification so freely, I am amazed you have been so easily repulsed."

"Not as easily, perhaps, as you imagine; though having had the wisdom to attend to hints, I spared myself the mortification of a refusal. I had the pleasure of hearing Lady Catharine Alford name me the Northern Bear; and, in answer to a whisper from De Roos, decline, with a contemptuous laugh, the post of leader. I had also the delight of hearing Miss Carleton declare to a group of young ladies, who perfectly agreed with her, I was the most 'hideous monster' she had ever beheld, that her mother called De Roos and myself 'Beauty and the Beast;' and that she was in a horrid fright lest I should ask her to dance, though nothing should induce her to stand up with me. I heard Mrs. Mahon tell her daughter, who would, I believe, have taken pity on me, to say she was engaged, and not encourage my being with her. And even Miss Jones, as I was no border chief, took care to let me understand, before I could ask, she was engaged three deep. Who can accuse me of having been easily repulsed?"

"No one!" said Helen, glowing with indignation. "Yet should you not judge of all by a few. There are still some who would feel pleasure and honour in your attentions."

"Pleasure and honour 'from a stupid country scarecrow, as sallow as a kite's foot! patched and lame,' to borrow the description of Miss Carleton: it may not be. Your pity, Miss St. Maur, misleads your judgment."

"I will not have my judgment impugned. I repeat there are some who would deem it pleasure and honour to dance with Mr. Elliott, and who hold patch and lameness and thinness and sallowness, as honourable trophies of an act of bravery."

"I was not aware that you knew—" and he stopped in confusion, whilst the sallowness of his cheek gave place to a bright glow, which lingered awhile, lending to the thin face almost a look of beauty.

"Nor did I know it till a few minutes since. Yet it did but confirm my former impressions; for I pique myself on my penetration as well as my judgment."

"I cannot rob myself of the pleasure a belief in both affords, and this night has lost its melancholy character; but I will not link the noble and the lovely with an object of contempt even for the short space of a quadrille."

"Would you force a lady to such a breach of etiquette as to signify her assent unasked?"

"Could you? Would you?" he paused, for a wild tumult of feelings rushed through him. He knew he was designated as her protégée, and were she to dance with him, it might subject her to unpleasant remark. Was it generous to allow her to do this? And yet how could he resist what had been his brightest hope for days? How could he, by declining, appear to fling back the kindness offered? Fortunately for his pleasure or his generosity, another decided the debate.

"Miss St. Maur, may I hope the intense and almost overpowering heat will not deprive me of the supreme felicity of following your graceful movements in the quadrille, after the one just forming, and attending you at the refecton."

This was uttered in a lisping tone and mimicking manner, by a most interesting dandy, as Miss Jones called him.

"Your petition has been presented rather too late. Mr. Elliott is already destined for the high station; and that too, without duly appreciating the honour, I suspect;" she added in a low tone, with arch look.

"Believe it not?" said Mr. Elliott, every feature glowing with such animated gratitude that, to avoid further expressions of pleasure, she dismissed the affected youth in search of Alford.

"Will you never be wearied in kindness, Miss St. Maur? Are you not yet tired of patronising the 'northern bear, the wild ourang-outang?'"

"What can you mean?" inquired the amazed Helen, blushing and confused at his penetrating look. "Surely—"

"Surely De Roos could not have betrayed you? you would say," he replied in a tone of disappointment; "pardon me, if for one moment I doubted the truth of his tale. My debt of gratitude is but the greater, and the subject shall never again be even alluded to."



"No, Mr. Elliot; having once been entered on, the subject must be cleared up, even at the expense of my blushes," her indignation at De Roos and sympathy for Elliott half-mastering her confusion. "Will you tell me by what means, and for what purpose, my idle nonsense has become known?"

"The former I can explain, the latter must be guessed. De Roos, by mistake, as he would have me believe, handed me a letter to his father the morning of my first visit to Hurleston; from which I learnt you had heard a description of my person, and to pleasure him had promised to patronise this northern bear; this wild ourang-outang. He strongly, even passionately, urged me to silence, but I was too indignant to give a pledge, though had I not, fascinated by your kindness, hoped and believed the statement false, I should not have mentioned it. I have been rightly punished for my presumption, and must pay the penalty by apologizing to you and him. I determined to decline your invitation, and persisted in my refusal, till a taunt won me to a proud compliance. Why he made such a point of my accompanying him; or why he chose to reach Hurleston so late; for the delay was his contrivance (though so skilfully managed as to make me almost believe it occasioned by myself), I know not, unless it was that one and all might mark the contrast of our *entrées*. Yet he is too little of a coxcomb to manœuvre for a petty triumph, and I have yet to learn a deeper reason. With all the wounded vanity and indignation of a simple country youth, who, living in solitude and unaccustomed to slights, could neither parry a jest, nor repress an insolence, but by an exertion of strength ridiculously disproportioned to the annoyance—and who had not yet learnt to rate himself as others rated him—I entered your drawing-room with the sublime intent of crushing the impertinence of patronage. What a revulsion of feeling did your words, your manner, occasion! I found pity, instead of patronage; sympathy, instead of impertinence. I felt the folly of being proud and then the consciousness of being awkward. I heard the laugh of ridicule, and the words of disgust; but I met from you kindness, the most touching, the most considerate; you seemed to guess at every embarrassment, that you might prevent or alleviate it; till I ceased to blush at my own weakness, since it afforded such a flattering display of benevolent feeling. The mortifications I had met with since I left my native wilds, were all forgotten. What were they to your sympathy! My mind resumed its healthful tone; my spirit again rose buoyant at the words of interest. But the dream is

broken—the beautiful fancy fled for ever—and I must learn coldness and fortitude from sterner instructors.”

He turned away as he ceased, but Helen’s gentle tones recalled him.

“I should be piqued at the readiness with which you discard fancy and dream, and deprive me of my virtues, could you not plead some cause for so harsh a judgment; if that judgment can be defended, which is given on the hearing of one side alone.”

“The words of De Roos were false then,” he said, interrupting her eagerly? “Can you forgive my precipitate judgment?”

“Not exactly false, I fear,” said Helen in a hesitating voice.

“Not exactly false!” he repeated: his animation dying away, as he marked her confusion; and then he stood before her with a cold, almost proud, demeanour.

She marked the change; it increased her confusion, and she was silent.

“Again I must ask pardon for my presumption,” he said proudly; shrinking with the sensitiveness of a feeling mind nurtured in solitude, from the galling idea of having been made a dupe and a ridicule: and that too, by one whose esteem be coveted. “Permit me to express my gratitude for the past, by whatever motive prompted, and to assure you there shall be no further intrusion for the future.”

“Stay, Mr. Elliott,” said Helen, in a tone which though friendly was rather peremptory. “The past must be explained before the future can be determined on; an explanation is due to both.”

He spoke not, but stood before her watching her changing cheek, for her momentary firmness had deserted her, and she was again blushing and confused. She could not but feel the awkwardness of her situation, and that every moment of continued silence must increase it. She felt too for him, and after a short pause she said, meeting his look, though colouring as she did so:

“Can you read a lady’s blushes so ill, as to set her down for a hypocrite because she chance to change colour? I have not deceived you.”

“Your pardon; I thought you had owned the expressions.”

“Nay then, if I am to be condemned for those ugly words, I may as well say guilty at once, and throw myself on your

mercy. And yet," she added, glancing up with one of her own bright witching smiles, "you look so very inexorable, I am half afraid to venture?" and then she looked down again in beautiful confusion.

"Inexorable! and to you! Think it not!" and every appearance of pride was gone. "I will believe you against the world; will deem you incapable of wrong, though my own senses avouched it."

"Such conduct would be neither wise or desirable," she replied more coldly, startled at the sudden warmth of his manner. "I simply ask a hearing of my explanation."

"But I require no explanation; and own all the pride and folly of having dared to doubt."

"You are mistaken! Five minutes hence you will desire the very explanation you now refuse; and hear it you must, for my satisfaction, if not for you own. It is not very agreeable to be obliged to own having called names," she continued more playfully, "and yet I suppose I must be candid enough to do so. And now for the palliating circumstances that may win me forgiveness. I had heard any thing but a flattering account of you; owed some propitiation to Mr. De Roos, whom I had just offended: and, as he could not come without you, insisted on your accompanying him, saying, as a mere *fazon de parler*, for I see you must hear all, that he and I could make any thing the fashion short of an ourang-outang. I so detest the idea of 'patronising,' that, if I mentioned the word, it must have been in jest. There now, the horrid tale is out. Am I forgiven? or is there any other question you would ask?"

"Forgiven! It is I should ask forgiveness, for having wronged you even in thought; but that letter did not state the matter as it should have done, and yet—" he hesitated.

"Yet what? I owe you something for forgiving me so readily, and judging against appearances."

"Well, then! And yet you started when I entered the room. Did you find me more hideous than even De Roos had painted me? and I know his is no friendly hand."

"Is not this unconscionable, and showing no mercy for my blushes? Must I account for my looks as well as my words. Well, be it so; I find an honourable retreat requires far more skill than a brilliant advance. What, if I had pictured Mr. Elliott to myself a gawky youth, with lank yellow hair, blue eyes, more arms than he could well tell how to dispose of; a leg too many, perhaps a pull of the hair

in the country style for a bow, and as much of blushing as his hostess exhibits!"

He could not but laugh. "Oh, that this were the palace of truth, and I might demand in what the real differed from the fancied!"

"Were your wish gratified, Mrs. Throgmorton's rooms would no longer be crowded. I for one should depart instantly: for worlds I would not hear the secret opinion of those I love, lest wounded vanity should lessen my affection! But I do not mean to shrink from your question. I started at seeing one so different from what I had expected; so stern, so proud; but another look enabled me to read your feelings, as you have described them, and to interest me in your fate."

"That is, you pitied my weakness."

"Now are you like your sex! going to quarrel with receiving at one moment, what you will pretend to sigh for the next. The pity I felt for Mr. Elliott was not such as I should have felt for the blushing yellow-haired youth I had expected; the proudest, ere the evening was over, need not have shrunk from being its object; and since Annie Grey's tale, pity is out of the question. Are you content now? I never made so many confessions before!"

"Nor would you now, were I more favoured by rank or fortune: presumption itself could not mistake your kindness; yet if not too bold I would make one request. You did not say who had done me the honour of depicting me, but I do De Roos no injustice in ascribing it to him. I will not quarrel with him for his personal description; indeed, I am at this moment too happy to quarrel with any; nor dare I ask what further he said. I would but entreat a kindly judgment on any character he may give me."

"You doubt his friendship and sincerity then?"

"Doubts have long since been dispelled by certainty; and my forced sojourn with him is as hateful to him as, a short time since, to me. I am not what he would have me thought, and the time may come when he shall be forced to do me justice."

"Mr. Elliott," said Helen hastily, alarmed at his rising colour and flashing eye; "I hope I need not point out, that from the peculiarity of our late conversation, delicacy to me demands that this subject should never be mentioned, either to Mr. De Roos or others."

"Fear not!" he said, anxious to quiet her alarm. "What

has passed shall be remembered, but not repeated. De Roos and I can never be friends; fire and water might rather mingle in the same stream. But I dare not lift my hand against a fellow-man, to redress a private wrong; and even he would scarcely seek my life, though he would blight my prospects and stain my character. If he only ridiculed my person and manners, I frankly forgive him;" and he fixed a penetrating look on Helen.

She looked confused, remembering he had made heavier charges; but she rallied almost instantly, and met his gaze without shrinking.

"Only very extraordinary circumstances can warrant the disclosure of a private conversation. I accept your pledge of silence, and believe me, will not see through the glass of another: in return, you must not let what I am going to say pain you. Being on such terms with Mr. De Roos, it may be unpleasant to apply to him in any way. Alford is already your friend; and my cousin, Mr. Euston, will not be less so."

"Do not think me such a churl as to feel pain at your kindness, because it brings more fully home the desolation of my fate; but I have no words to thank you. What I seek from De Roos and his father is justice. If they prove my claim to be false, they are quit of me for ever, as I will receive no favour at their hands; should they allow it, I shall purchase a commission and win glory or death: nor will I hesitate to avail myself of your kindness. Alford has already offered his interest, and I am not too proud to accept those favours which a noble mind can offer, and a noble mind receive."

"Remember then," said Helen, much moved, "you are not destitute of friends under any circumstances, and I claim your acquaintance for my cousin."

He answered only by a look, a slight inclination, and then turned away abruptly. But it was such a look, that Alford who came up at the moment stared after him in wonder; and report says, Helen never forgot it.

"What magic wand do you possess, Helen?" asked Alford. "There are all the people in the room, save some old dowagers, to whom he resigned seats, vowing Elliott is a stupid ill-looking bear; but no sooner do you speak to him, than he looks like Etna in a playful mood; all brightness, and I had almost said all beauty. What did you say to him?"

"Promised him Robert's interest joined to yours."

"That is your own under the veil of Robert's name: well, even he will not be jealous of Elliott."

"Something like it certainly, but no need to furnish the gossips with tales. They can find or invent enough without my aid. Are you disengaged? Poor Miss Mason has been sitting still all the evening scarcely noticed by any."

"So you want me to take pity on her! What do you think of that, Elliott? Miss St. Maur expects me to dance with all the poor, plain, dowdies in the room, because no one else will!"

"Miss St. Maur asks nothing but what she does herself. I wish my rank were such as to enable me to fulfil her kind intentions."

"After such a speech I can linger no longer; but it is a horrid disappointment, for I thought she meant to ask me to dance with herself."

"You could not possibly suspect me of such an impropriety;" and she glanced archly at Elliott. "But away! or you will be too late."

"If you think it expedient that Miss Mason should bear the ridicule of the two despised ones dancing together, I am at your command."

"Thank you! After Alford has resigned her hand, she will I am sure, be delighted; and you shall be my *vis-à-vis*."

"Like the pale moon winning our light from you."

"It is not requisite you should live in the Palace of Truth. I verily believe you have the fable ring in your possession."

"I must answer in other words than my own:—

' Her goodness and her worth to spy,  
You need but gaze in Ellen's eye.  
Not Katrine, in her mirror blue,  
Gives back her shaggy banks more true,  
Than every freeborn glance confest  
The guileless movements of her breast.'

"Then it seems I am to bear the blame of your embarrassing penetration. I doubt if the Ariosto of the North would approve of such a perversion of his poetry; and I must take lessons in deception, or I can never hope to keep a secret."

"Room, ladies, room!" exclaimed Alford, returning, and insisting on the two fair damsels granting him a seat between them.

"What is the matter?"

"Matter, Miss St. Maur? Matter enough! If you will

not keep off that horrid Mrs. Carleton, there will be murder before the evening is over ;” and he fanned himself violently.

“It is a serious affair, I perceive ; and we will do our *devoir* to prevent such a fearful catastrophe. But take pity on our curiosity, and tell us, did she scold for the confusion you caused at her dinner ?”

“Nero’s cruelty was nothing to yours ! Reminding me of that *démele*, and the long harangue I endured during our drive home. It is worse, a thousand times worse. Positively the wretch has been telling every one that ‘her son John had some thoughts of you at one time, but she was happy to say he soon gave them up ; such a daughter-in-law would not have suited her at all !’ I am only glad I heard her. I vouched for having seen John on his knees once, and report said twice ; and I assured her that no one out of Bedlam could believe her tale. If she does not deserve burking, I know not who does. I only hope I have put you in such a passion, that you will forbid her your house.”

“For shame, Alford ! How can you say such things ? and where is the delicacy you boast of preserving in all that concerns me ? Why not let the remark pass unnoticed ?”

“Unnoticed ! and let the world suppose that dolt had denied you ? Since you are not proud for yourself, your friends must be proud for you. But this is not the whole ;” and he whispered. “She had the insolence to say, ‘Some people think that Miss Grey pretty, but I say she is like a blighted snow-drop, that has come out a month too soon.’”

“Ha ! now the murder is out.”

“For shame !” said Alford, avoiding her arch look ; “when I am ever ready to be your defender ; but even this is not all ;” and he spoke aloud. “She declares to every one that the Mahons are trying to catch her son John, as a last resource, for they are entirely ruined, and bailiffs in the house.”

“Impossible ! Mrs. Mahon looks as calm as ever.”

“Oh, poor dear Mrs. Mahon !” exclaimed Mrs. Jones, approaching, “Have not you heard ? So shocking !” And she began her tale with all the delight of a thorough gossip at finding an ignorant listener. “Only think. Mr. Mahon had the imprudence to place all his money in the hands of a friend, who was a banker, and now he has failed and run away. Only think how dreadful ! And they say besides, that, somehow or other, his name was in the bank ; and so the creditors have seized on every thing. Shocking, that the father of a family should be so imprudent ! And

would you believe it? the bailiffs are in the house now, though she gives out he is ill; and moreover Mrs. Mahon went down on her knees to the bailiffs, to let her and her daughters have their ball dresses and come to the ball; and one of them is here dressed as a footman; and she has brought Miss Elizabeth as well as Miss Caroline, in hopes some one will take them off her hands, and she is trying all she can to catch Mr. De Roos and Mr. John Carleton; and she won't let her daughters tell any thing about it, just as if we did not know! Shocking thing, indeed! And only think, they say Mr. Wilder has been playing in town, and lost forty thousand pounds, and his wife's jewels. Is it not dreadful?"

"Dreadful indeed, if true;" said Helen, as Mrs. Jones stopped for an instant to take breath, not having ventured to pause before, lest some one should forestall her story.

"Oh, it is all quite true, I assure you."

"How can you know that?"

"Well now, I'll tell you," said the gossip, looking important, coming close up to her, and speaking in a confidential manner. "My maid's sister lives housemaid with Mrs. Mahon; and as I had heard from a friend something odd about two strange men, I sent Jane over, just as if she went to see her sister, you know, that she might learn all about it. I would have gone myself, but then they might have said, 'Not at home,' and I thought she would learn more from the servants. And so she did; for she asked one of the bailiffs himself, and he told her all about it; and I was the first who knew it; for no one suspected any thing till I told them. I hear he is to go to gaol to-morrow, and that she will have nothing but her settlement, which is only one hundred a-year."

"Is it possible," said Helen, indignantly, "that you could be mean enough to send your servant to pry into the sorrows of the unfortunate, for the pleasure of detailing them to the world? For your own sake spread the report no further. The person who delights in spreading evil tales, and attributing evil motives, should be shunned by all as a pest."

"I am sure—I am very sorry," stammered forth the half petrified gossip, "I had not the slightest intention of offending you."

"You have not offended me, but you have shown yourself a mischievous tale-bearer;" and Helen walked to the other end of the conservatory.



"Now do, my lord, persuade Miss St. Maur to forgive me. I am sure I would not vex her for the world."

Her terror lest she should be denied the *entrée* at Hurleston, and Helen's indignation, so rarely excited, caused some merriment to the young lord, a merriment he seemed inclined to prolong; for, putting on a grave air, he said, "Indeed! I don't know what to say, Miss St. Maur looks very angry and I am afraid to venture. Do you know of nothing to propitiate her?"

"Yes! yes!" cried she joyfully after a moment's pause. "If she will but listen to me, I know something that it will please her to hear."

"I will insure you a hearing then," said the laughter-loving young man, curious to hear what she could have to say.

Helen turned round as they approached, but before she could do more than look a question, Mrs. Jones began with her former breathless and uninterruptible haste, and with the assured manner of one certain of a favourable reception for her intelligence:

"Oh, Miss St. Maur! that Mr. Elliott is in the army, and is a great man in disguise, and his name is not Elliott; and I can tell you all about him. I heard Lady Catharine Alford call him Urser Major, and then all the people laughed at her mistake, because she did not call him Major Urser. Well, I wanted to know more, and so I just asked Mr. Dalton what regiment he belonged to; and, for once, he answered civilly, and seemed to know all about him, for he said he was connected with the staff of one of the Polish regiments; and when I asked if he had a very high situation, he said a most exalted one indeed, higher than was held by any one in the county; and yet there are three dukes and the lord lieutenant, in the county, and ever so many lords and generals. But I dare say you guessed this, you were so civil to him. Only think how condescending he must be! And so unfortunate! Susy gave him to understand she would not dance with him, and perhaps he might have taken a fancy to her. I wish I could see him to say how sorry she was."

"Have then your wish!" cried the laughing Alford dragging forward Elliott from behind a shrub. "Come Elliott, come! and enact the part of staff officer in one of the Polish regiments. Whose staff did you say?" questioning the embarrassed Mrs. Jones, who was favouring the newly-discovered *exalté* with curtsy upon curtsy.

"The earl of Leicester's, I think Mr. Dalton said."

Alford's laugh was louder than before, and even Helen and Miss Grey could not repress their smiles, so ludicrous were the lady's humility and mistakes; but the former checked herself instantly, and without glancing at Elliott, for fear of increasing his mortification, was on the point of putting an end to the scene, when he prevented her by joining in the laugh, and telling her he had acquired more self-possession than when they first met.

Taking courage from his good humour, without ceasing her curtesies, Mrs. Jones poured forth her apologies, assuring him of her daughter's readiness to dance with him, amid the renewed laughter of the gentlemen, and the smiles of the ladies.

"I am sorry you should have had so much trouble in apologizing," said Elliot at length, when she paused for an instant, "I assure you I hold no exalted station, and Mr. Dalton must have been seeking his own amusement, when he told you so."

"Now do tell me, my lord, is this really true?" inquired she earnestly, completely mystified; "or does not he like to have it known?"

A glance from Helen made Alford answer fairly for once.

"It is true, and you had better go to Mr. Dalton. Tell him we have had a good laugh, and that he must set you right. Always suspect him when civil."

"And for the future be less inclined to believe and relate," added Helen, in a tone that, though low and gentle, convinced the gossip her acquaintance with the heiress stood on rather a perilous footing. "We ought to apologize to you, Mr. Elliott," said Helen. "Alford forgot in Mrs. Jones's folly how much mischief her tattle may make."

"I need no apology, and was as much entertained as the rest of the party. Habit, and the delightful certainty that there are still some interested in my fate, will, in time I trust, make me a perfect hero in society, though I must expect a relapse or two."

"For my part," said Alford, "I consider it quite a treat to see Helen in a passion, and had been trying at it all the evening in vain."

"How can you treat so lightly her conduct towards the unfortunate? but I believe I am in the wrong; a gossip will be a gossip as long as she meets encouragement. Is what she said true?"

"I fear part of her intelligence is correct, but I will learn if I can. As to Miss Mason, the quadrille had begun, so I dance with her the next, and come back to claim my reward. Miss Grey takes my other arm in to supper, and dances with me the one after, and you form one of my party, and honour me with your hand the second. No remonstrance! 'tis the fashion to-night to dance twice with those we like;" and leading Miss Grey to a seat, he took one beside her, and soon engaged all her attention.

## CHAPTER II.

"I lived an unloved, solitary thing."

KERKE WHITE.

"The beings of the mind are not of clay.  
Essentially immortal, they create  
And multiply in us a brighter ray  
And more beloved existence ; that which fate  
Prohibits to dull life, in this our state  
Of mortal bondage, by these spirits supplied,  
First exiles, then replaces what we hate,  
Watering the heart whose early flowers have died,  
And with a fresher growth replenishing the void.  
Yet there are things whose strong reality  
Outshines our fairy land : in shape and hues  
More beautiful than our fantastic sky."

BYRON.

As the conservatory was cool, sufficiently filled to make none particular, yet sufficiently empty to allow conversation without being overheard by your next neighbour, Helen preferred it to the ball-room.

"My womanly feelings will not permit me to understand the rapture and intoxication of gaming," remarked our heroine to Elliott, after hearing part of the report concerning Mr. Wilder confirmed in sorrow by a relative. "I can comprehend the *enivrement* of the hero and the statesman,—the thrill of glory and ambition, even unhallowed by nobler motives, than man's applause ; nay, I can feel some sympathy for the exciting bustle of a man of business ; but that a man of talent, an affectionate father and husband, should risk his all upon

a die, feel no remorse at ruining all loved by himself or another, is something too sublime, I suppose I must say, for my weak understanding to grapple with."

"I should have said the same in my days of youth and innocence, but I have felt there are times when such excitement, despicable as it is, can charm even to intoxication; and never can I be sufficiently thankful for not having met with even a shadow of ill fortune. It is only in evil hour such things can charm, when the impatience of youth, and a habit of discontent and murmuring urged us on to snatch from fortune what we should seek humbly and patiently from Providence. Yet some have not even the poor excuse of want."

"Am I to believe you a gambler, then?" she inquired earnestly—what De Roos had said recurring to her mind. "Your speech favours the Manichean doctrine; a good and evil spirit seem to hold equal sway; for whilst you condemn the act, you rejoice in reaping its fruits. How could you, with your opinions, play at all?"

"Do we never act contrary to our better judgment? I fear I have forfeited your good opinion by the confession; yet was it a solitary error, with some rather palliating circumstances, and deeply deplored; but the tale is long and sad; and I hope and trust I have enacted the gambler for the last time."

" 'You must read me this riddle,  
And tell me this tale.' "

—I owe half my popularity to being a good listener."

"But the tale concerns myself, and has too little event to be interesting."

"That excuse will not hold good in these days of autobiographies, when the romances of chivalry, with their fays and their marvels, and their deeds of gallantry, have yielded place to the sometimes monstrously lengthened chain of thoughts and feelings. I can take no denial, for I have as much curiosity as Mrs. Jones, to know all about you. Remember, all autobiographers are wonderful children, marvellous boys, and extraordinary men—thinking before others possess the power of thought, and describing their feelings before they could distinguish 'a hawk from a handsaw.' "

"Then my autobiography will be perfectly original," he said, answering her bright smile with one almost as bright, "for I can boast of nothing wonderful, marvellous, or extra-

ordinary. I have only felt as others would have felt in my situation, and have such a horror of playing the egotist, that I shall deny all knowledge of my past life."

"No! no! no!" with a playful shake of the head. "Courage! *ce n'est que le premier pas qui coûte*. I am dying with curiosity, and must hear every thing, ay, from the very beginning."

"Well, then! Once upon a time, a raw simple youth came up to town."

She shook her head.

"You do not like this commencement? You are fastidious; and if you do not let me tell my story in my own way, I shall never be able to tell it at all. Once more, you must imagine me a little boy between four and five years of age, with bright curling locks, laughing eyes, and 'witching dimples; in short, a perfect picture—a subject for Lawrence—a Cupid in beauty and archness. Will that do?"

She nodded a laughing assent, and he continued with a countenance changing its expression every moment—now saddened by melancholy—now glowing with animated hope. Nor were the words and thoughts that occasioned these changes, less rapid than the changes themselves. There was no pause, no seeking for words, no studied antithesis. It was the cataract of a noble mind, pouring forth its waters from its own bright impulse. The lightning of a pent up heart, to one of kindred mould.

"I was half sitting, half reclining in a lady's lap, twining my fingers in her rich bright curls, that rested on my cheek as she bent over me. She looked down upon my laughing face, and, child as I was, I felt there was something painful in her smile as she returned my caress. She would have raised her head, but I bent it down with one arm round her neck, whilst the other hand twisted flowers in her long rich hair. When my flowers were exhausted, I let her go, that I might look at her. 'Now beautiful, mamma;' I said 'beautiful,' and she repeated the word in such a tone—it lingers on my memory still. 'Does not every body love what is beautiful, mamma? Nurse says so!' 'Love, child! no one loves me now!' 'Yes, mamma, I do, and nurse does, and Carlo does.' She tried to smile—she could not; but she clasped me to her heart with a wild pressure that almost made me shrink. 'Yes! yes!' she exclaimed, 'you alone are left me, and you I must leave. No father! no mother! Heaven shield my child!' and then she bent over me, kissing

my brow, my lips, my cheeks, with all a mother's passionate fondness. Tears mingling with her caresses, I had been used to; but there was a solemnity in her manner at that moment, that made me submit in silence, and without return. Once more she bent over me, kissed my forehead, murmured 'Bless you, my child!' and then leant back in the high chair in which she was sitting.

"It was a bright summer's day; the sun was shining full into the little room, and there were gay flowers without, and bees and birds and butterflies. My mother's eyes were not closed, yet I thought she slept; so I sat quite still, looking out upon the gay insects, and gayer flowers. It was my first effort at self-denial, for I longed to be out chasing those butterflies, and picking those flowers. I was tolerably quiet for some time, hoping my mother would waken, and when she did not, I became impatient. The flowers began to close, the bees became less numerous, and I grew more impatient still. I looked again at my mother; the bright blossoms I had twined in her hair were drooping and withering. I kissed her hand; it was cold, and her cheek was very, very pale; but then it was always so. I called mamma; there was no answer. I lost all patience; I climbed up, clasped my little arms round her neck, and pressed my lips to her's. I called her by every endearing name, and listened for an answer, but none came; my caresses grew more ardent, but they met with no return. In a passion of love, fear, and anger, I became more violent. The pale thin face fell forward, and the cold, cold cheek rested on my shoulder! Its chilling touch has never been forgotten.

"I did not move, but I believe I screamed, for nurse entered suddenly, uttered an exclamation of terror, replaced the drooping head, and took me from the room. There was a great confusion in the house; the 'hasty tramp of horses' feet—strange people came and went—and they said I could not see my mother. My passion at the refusal became dangerous to myself; and a stranger taking me by the hand, led me into a darkened chamber. There were strange black things upon the bed, and a something low and long raised from the floor. He led me towards it, took me in his arms, and I looked down upon my mother, little altered for she was scarcely paler than in life. Awe at the strange sights I saw, had hushed my cries and tears as I entered the room; but when I looked down upon my mother, with a wild scream of joy, I sprang from the stranger's arms and

clung around her. The fearful chill of that embrace—the thought even now can freeze the current of my blood!—and in moments of desolation it claims an early victim for the tomb. Why slept not the babe with its mother?

“I have been since told that the fever produced by my passion, and the shock of that embrace, caused me a long and dangerous illness, the weakness attendant on which left me for weeks too much exhausted to observe or inquire.

“What I recollect next was, saying I wanted to go home, I did not like where I was; and above all I wanted mamma, and nurse, and Carlo. Then came all the stories they tell to children about being put in the pit-hole, and if good I should see them again in heaven. Carlo they brought me. I did not believe them. What does a child comprehend of death? and I ran away to seek my mother. My attendant brought me back, and again assured me she was in heaven—in the sky. I looked up there hour after hour, day after day, till the white clouds of the summer sky, of snowy whiteness, or tinged with the setting sun, and the pale evening star, became associated with her memory—they are so still; and often a sweet pale lady came to me in my dreams, fanning me with silver wings, or breathing kisses on my brow. She seemed the only one who loved me. These childish fancies would, doubtless, have soon passed away, if fondness from others, or any event worth remarking, had occurred to obliterate them. But there was no such event, and no such fondness. My new nurse was harsh and stupid; and my tutor, or protector, or whatever he might be, with whom I resided, was learned and attentive, but never affectionate. I learned with facility, because I liked learning; I obeyed, because there was no reason for disobedience; but I never did, I never could love Mr. Stanton.

“In after years I inquired for my parents. They had married contrary to the wishes of the relations of both, and those relations had thrown them off. My father had been in the army, and died in America. My mother had not lingered long, and Lord Fitzallan, as a friend of the former, took charge of me. I saw him twice; but he loved my father too much or too little for my presence, to give him pleasure. I pleaded to visit my mother's grave. Mr. Stanton was deaf to my entreaties; he could not, or would not tell me where it was. I had but three treasures on earth. On the day of my mother's death she had allowed me to take from her neck, and hang round my own, a large locket, which I had

been permitted to retain. I had also a lock of her hair, and these two things are never separated from me. Then I had Carlo: dear, dear, Carlo! how I loved him. He was a large handsome spaniel, who scarcely ever left me. You would smile if I should tell you how I doted on these things, but I had nothing else to love. In time poor Carlo died—believe he had honourable burial, with as elegant a tomb as I could make him, and for his sake I had no second favourite. Mr. Stanton shunned society, and my life was lonely in the extreme. I could not live without something to love, so I made a garden, and planted flowers, and reared birds and beasts, and every living thing I could get, sometimes to Mr. Stanton's annoyance, for my favourites were not always as quiet as they might have been; and he once said he might as well have lived in Noah's ark. I made friends too with the farmers and cottagers round, and for a time was tolerably happy; but I believe some of my happiness arose from believing myself a prodigy in learning, not knowing any to compare with me. I am convinced too much that solitude engenders pride and self-will. Mr. Stanton took me to a neighbouring town, and my dream of happiness fled. I saw boys at cricket; I would have joined them, but Mr. Stanton forbade it. They had friends and companions. There was the jest, the laugh, the light retort; but I had neither friends or companions—these things were not for me. I tried to console myself by thinking I was their superior in learning; but I overheard a conversation which obliged me to confess my own inferiority. I passed a beautiful cottage, with such a garden before as I thought I remembered in my childhood. There was a window looking into that garden, and a fair pale lady sitting at it. A carriage stopped at the gate, and a boy sprang out. That pale lady rushed from the house, saying, 'My child! my child!' The feelings of my early years returned. I fancied it was my own sweet mother, and I sprang forward, calling on her. 'Fool!' cried Mr. Stanton, 'you have no mother;' seizing my arm as he spoke. I struggled; but the boy who had left the carriage passed me, and was clasped in that lady's arms. Then—then, indeed, I felt I had no mother.

"I left that town a different creature to what I had entered it. The sadness of that day—the loneliness of that night! My garden was neglected, and the flowers withered and died. The caresses of my favourites were coldly received—almost repulsed. What were flowers and birds, to



mothers and friends? I had before but suspected my lonely state, but now I knew it. That town was hateful, and nothing could ever induce me to enter it again. I grew silent and sad, cherishing my sorrow, till even Mr. Stanton perceived and questioned me; when my hoarded grief burst forth with a violence that alarmed him. He relaxed something from his coldness, and even allowed me to play with some boys of my own age, residing a few miles distant. But my dreary solitude had done its work. Never was being less able to bear, less calculated to win; and I might have been a gloomy misanthrope for life, but for a new inmate of our village.

"You will smile at the simple epochs of my life; but my acquaintance with Mrs. Dawson was a new era in my existence. She was a widow lady, about forty-five, with no one thing remarkable about her, but the sunny brightness of her humour. With her it was always summer; every thing was for the best. There might be wicked people in the world, but she had never met with them. She traced some good from every misfortune, and saw a blessing in every sorrow. Her name would have furnished one of the three happy persons, whose existence would have restored the dead queen to her sorrowing husband. Yet was she neither rich, nor handsome, nor highly born; her happiness was the happiness of the mind, and not of circumstance. There are many Christians of higher intellectual attainments, but never was there one possessed of more humility, cheerfulness, and charity. I verily believe she loved every body and every thing; at least I am sure she loved me, and never can I feel sufficient gratitude for her kindness. Wise precepts I should have rejected with a proud heart: her loving example I could not withstand. Poor Mrs. Dawson! her death left me almost as lonely as before; but, thanks to her example, better fitted to bear. It was from her I learnt to feel I had blessings for which to be thankful. Her love taught me to forget I was an isolated being. She made me sing with her; she procured me books; she opened to my mind a new career; she talked to me of kindness she had received, till I learnt to believe the world a paradise, and all its inhabitants as good as herself. I studied French under her instruction, though no very scientific teacher, and then other languages, without any instruction. This was a new and absorbing pursuit, that enchained every faculty for a time. There are difficulties in acquiring a language with-

out an instructor, which it flattered my pride to overcome; besides, the works in these new tongues furnished me with new ideas, and an active mind must live upon actions, ideas, or itself. My solitude forbade the former; and I was glad to devote myself to the second, to avoid the latter. I should be ashamed to tell the strange collection of works of every description I perused about this time. The acquiring knowledge, the developement of thought, became a passion; and it would have been better for me if I had had a clever and judicious counsellor, as well as a kind purveyor for my craving literary appetite. Again did happiness appear within my grasp; my spirits became light and buoyant; the world again looked bright before me; the cold sternness of reality had passed away, replaced by the dazzling brilliancy of fancy: some of those fairy dreams are lingering still. The reading in which I had indulged had given a romantic turn to my ideas and principles, which, with a weak judgment, or a less judicious friend than I met with afterwards, might have been dangerous to one nurtured in solitude and ignorance of his fellow man, though in general romance is at the worst but a lovely dream, as brief as brilliant; and I doubt if any but the thoroughly cold and heartless have been quite proof against its beautiful witchery. I certainly was at that time like the mortal dwelling in elfin abodes; my eyes had not been anointed, and I saw gold and jewels, where the better initiated saw only tinsel and coloured glass. If Don Quixote were really intended to have the moral Sismondi supposes, I abhorred it; and the high estimation in which the book is held by the cold and selfish must prove its uselessness; and that in these worldly days, at least, there is no chance of romance rivalling ancient Rome in the extent of her dominion.

"After the death of Mrs. Dawson I might have relapsed into my former misanthropy, had I not formed a new friendship almost immediately with a young clergyman just come into the neighbourhood, a younger son, who found himself, on the death of his father and elder brother, left with only four thousand pounds, the gift of an aunt, and the debts of his deceased relations amounting to nearly that sum. He never hesitated a moment: the debts were discharged, and he lived on his curacy. I suspect another circumstance rendered this loss doubly distressing, but he always shrank from the subject. His kindness was unremitting, his precepts invaluable. To him and Mrs. Dawson shall I be indebted for

every thing of good in my after life. His was cheerful resignation and pious hope. He sought to moderate, not destroy, my imagination; showed what the world really was, and should be, in the eyes of a Christian; and convinced me of the necessity of doing, as well as dreaming what was right. I wished to enter into some profession; and, influenced by the heroic tales I had loved in my childhood, I would have entered the army—it was denied to my wishes. I would then have studied the law, and again applied to Mr. Stanton and Lord Fitzallan. I was refused, with a taunt at my discontent. I would have rebelled; they were not my parents. I would have passed forth into the world, and wrought out renown by the force of my own will; for the bright visions of Mrs. Dawson had not quite faded before the more sober pictures of my later friend; but they showed me a paper in my mother's writing, consigning me to Lord Fitzallan's care, and bidding me show him obedience. I submitted, but the shaft rankled in my bosom, and my health declined. I was permitted to undertake a tour; and with a letter of introduction to some relations of my new friend, I started for a midland county.

"There were many things in this tour to recall the memory of my misery at that visit to the town of —. Again was the contrast of the orphan and the darling child, forced upon my heart, but the wound was less deep, or more skilfully leeches. There is no sorrow like a first sorrow. The family to whom I was introduced, was a happy and united one. The symptoms of misanthropy attacked me then, as they will probably do again, and the contrast of their happiness to my desolation, was at first almost agony; but either from my friend, or their own kindness, they guessed at my thoughts, and one and all vied with each other in striving to make me believe myself an object of regard. The dance, the song, the game—I was courted for all—they would make no party without me. If I sought a solitary walk, in which to brood, I soon heard a light footstep beside me, the eyes of a gay and happy child were looking up into my face, the little fingers were twined in mine, and the lisping tongue lured me to seek for flowers or berries. But I shall weary you. You, who must be loved by all, cannot tell what love was to me. Even the loving kiss of some little child was to me a blessing to be remembered; it brought the certainty that I was not quite an outcast. My heart still clings to those 'Green spots on memory's waste.' They too have suffered, and strangers are

now in their once happy home! I returned improved in health and spirits, and from that time wandered almost at my will, with my petted Bavrica, who was to me all that his namesake was to the gallant Cid; brought up, as he had been, on my plan of ruling by love, not fear.

"During one excursion, I came unexpectedly on a romantic cottage, with a small, but lovely garden. Could it be that I had ever seen it before, or had I dreamt of such an one? Might it be—was it—the one whose memory I had cherished from childhood? I sprang forward almost expecting to see my own sweet mother, such as I had pictured her to myself, tall, pale, and beautiful, almost beyond even woman's beauty. There was no lady there, but I looked into the little room, and memory grew more distinct. An elderly woman came to the door. 'Who lives here?' I asked. 'Mrs. Smith.' I turned away in disappointment, but the old lady was garrulous, and began a list of the former occupants. I listened in breathless expectation, drinking in every name, yet without the slightest remembrance of it a moment after, till she uttered the name of Elliott. I questioned her, and she told of a sad but beautiful lady of that name, who had come a stranger to the village some nineteen years before, with an old nurse, and a young child. 'Where is she?' I exclaimed, the wild thought that she might still live coming across me. 'There!' and the woman pointed to the spire of a church rising above the trees. Wild as had been the thought, its destruction was a shock—I was, for a brief space, motionless, —then springing over the fence, was in the church-yard in a few minutes.

"There was one tomb very simple, but with more of elegance than the others, and there was an humbler one at its foot—I needed no guide—it was my mother's grave! It told nothing more, save that there rested Cecil Elliott, aged twenty-three, with the date of the day, and year of her decease; and that more humble grave at its foot was the abiding place of my old nurse, Janet Douglass.

"I made inquiries, but could learn little. In upwards of nineteen years there had been deaths, and removals, and the loss of memory. The clergyman, the sexton, and the clerk, were dead. Some few remembered the lady's coming, but none knew from whence. More remembered her funeral, for it seemed to have been conducted with some pomp, and had been a splendid novelty in the simple village. They spoke of a noble-looking stranger who had attended, and sorrowed

much. A Lord, or a General, or something very grand—a name beginning with an F. ‘Was it Fitzallan?’ ‘Yes!’

“I lingered some time—there was something to which I could claim kindred, though it was but dust; and then I returned. I again questioned Mr. Stanton, and spoke of my mother’s grave. He looked confused, but would tell me nothing; and, after a violent altercation, I wrote to Lord Fitzallan, claiming a knowledge of my family, and declaring I would no longer remain in idleness. I believe the letter was rather imperious: but I was in that state wherein I would be dallied with no longer. Time passed—no answer came—I glanced by chance at a paper—a name caught my eye—I looked more intently. Lord Fitzallan had died suddenly a few days before, and whether he received my letter I know not.

“Was I ever thus to be the sport of fortune? I hurried home—I told Mr. Stanton. Never shall I forget his look of horror! He was fearfully agitated, and repeated continually! ‘Lord Fitzallan died suddenly!’ His agitation at length subsided, but he continued silent to all my entreaties, and the next morning I found he had departed, on business as *he* wrote; to avoid my questions, as *I* thought.

“I wrote to the present Lord Fitzallan, stating my situation, and requesting to know if he could furnish me with any intelligence concerning my family, or future prospects. After some time I had a kind reply, saying, that his late brother on his death-bed, without saying more about me, had recommended me to his care, and desired him to present me one hundred pounds, and that, though unfortunately not possessed of much interest, yet as I wished to enter the army, he would do his utmost to procure me a cadetship. Time passed, and I heard no more. My impatience began to change into despair, for the dislike of an inactive life increased daily; the burning thirst for action fevered every thought. Had I known more of the world, or had I suspected De Roos to have been his son, I had hoped less, and been less disappointed.

“I had been spending a few days with my friend, when I was suddenly summoned to attend Mr. Stanton. He had been most anxiously expecting my arrival, but a paralytic stroke had rendered him nearly unintelligible. Immediately on my entering, he put a paper into my hands, in which he made over to me the sum of three thousand pounds, due to him from Lord Fitzallan. He appeared disappointed at the

little thankfulness I expressed, and asked in a strange altered tone, 'if it were not enough?' 'Enough, for what?' I exclaimed; 'take it back, if you mean it should bribe me to silence,' and flung it from me. I implored him passionately to tell me something of my parents—only to reveal to me one person with whom I might claim kindred, and the blessing of the orphan should be upon his head. 'Curse me not! Curse me not!' he exclaimed vehemently, and I will tell you all I dare. His voice became so thick, that though he spoke for some time, and though all my senses were quickened by the intensity of my interest, I could distinguish nothing but 'Fitzallan—your mother—claims on him—demand them—and persist'—pointing to the paper—'go not to India.' His agony was so great at not being understood, that I had not the cruelty to question him further then, but promised to claim the three thousand pounds, and, to quiet him still more—not to go to India, and he fell asleep with my hand in his.

"His dreams or his agony must have been dreadful, for the cold dew stood on his forehead, and his groans were fearful. At length with a wild scream, he started from his sleep, stared round the apartment, as if expecting to behold some horrible object, and then recognising me, threw his arms about my neck, exclaiming: 'Save me! save me, Elliott! forgive me!' I promised forgiveness, though I knew not for what, and tried to sooth him, but it was all in vain; the more kindly and gently I spoke, the more violent became his distress; and the surgeon, who was present, advised silence. He spoke, but we could not understand—he tried to write—but his fingers could not guide the pen—his agony increased at the failure; he made a violent effort, and spoke more plainly. 'Tell Lord Fitzallan a death-bed is a fearful thing to a sinful man—a wicked oath awful to keep, or break. Tell him the curse of the dying and the dead; the wife, the orphan, be upon him if he refuse your rights.' Then came some unintelligible words, and after those silence. The suspense was agony. He was quiet for a few minutes; then clinging more wildly to me, he whispered in my ear, in an unearthly voice, 'Bid her go! and I will tell you all.—Your mother was ——!' he paused. 'Who? who? in mercy tell me!' He tried to answer—his features were dreadfully convulsed—there was a deep groan—a rattle in the throat—a clenching of the hands—and the ghastly face rested on my shoulder. It seemed the dead were ever to rest on me!

"There had been something to tell; and it had not been

told. Perhaps the only clue that might have developed my fate was broken!

"I wrote to Lord Fitzallan, claiming the three thousand pounds, and receiving no answer, set off for town. It was during this journey I had the pleasure to be of service to Mr. Hopkins, and to make a friend of one of the noblest of beings. His mother nursed me as her own son, during the long illness that succeeded, for it was three months before I could mount Bavnica, and proceed on my errand.

"My tale has already been so unconscionably long, that I will say nothing of my Whittingtonian dreams: nor do I feel sufficient regard for De Roos or for his father, to trust myself to dwell on their conduct. They may be in the right, at least I have no proof against them. His Lordship received me with politeness, and his manners are at times as fascinating as his son's. I spoke of Mr. Stanton's claim. My letter had never been received, and he thought there must be some mistake, for he recollected nothing of the transaction. What proof could I produce? I showed the paper; it was only signed Fitzallan, without any date. 'It was no signature of his, though like his writing; it might refer to his brother, and he would consult his lawyer; in the mean time I must remain with him; he would exert all his interest; and though really very poor, pay the money on his lawyer's opinion.' He seemed all kindness, but I was hurt to find myself slighted by his visitors.

"The poor and unhappy are too sensitive. I knew, from overheard remarks, that I was hideous and awkward; still I fancied there must be something more. My illness had left me weak and irritable, and I felt more than I should like to own, on finding I was considered as a fawning dependant. The gloomy feelings of my early youth returned, and I wavered between desperation and sulkiness. I would have left Lord Fitzallan instantly, but he soothed me with so much apparent kindness, that, completely won, I promised to remain with him, and apply to no one else till he had his lawyer's final opinion. He then questioned me as to possessing further papers concerning the bond, and hearing I had none, he shook his head, and said the lawyer declared the deed invalid. To believe that, at such an awful moment, Mr. Stanton could have uttered a falsehood, and that for the purpose of enriching one whom he had never loved, seemed worse than folly; and I repeated all that the dying man had said. He appeared much moved, and promised further in-

quiries should be made. Why he chose to keep me with him, I know not; and there are other parts of his conduct beyond my comprehension. A more than usually pointed slight, and the overheard remarks of a young lordling, too cruel not to wound, yet too general to excuse my demanding an apology, had on that day stung me nearly to madness. Lord Fitzallan saw this, exerted his powers of fascination to charm away the evil spirit, as he called it, insisted on my drinking more wine than customary, and accompanying him in the evening.

"With an aching head and heart, and burning brow, I followed him, and, for the first time entered a gaming-house. I took a seat beside him, thinking little of the game, or the objects around me. I thought of the past, I thought of the future; and my boyish predilection for the heroic returned. I was unknown, poor, friendless; but, despite all his kindness, I could never rely implicitly on Lord Fitzallan. If I could win fame and fortune, those who now shunned would court me. I should, at least, have the semblance of regard, and the pride of my spirit was bowed till it could prize even a semblance. If I fell, there was not one to mourn, not one to grieve. A dispute on the affairs of Greece, carried on near me, disturbed my reverie, but only to give it object and action. Greece! the land of heroes and of sages! the noble and the free! the polished and the brave! Was she to bend for ever beneath the Moslem's yoke? True, she had been for ages a scorn and a bye-word to others more fortunate, not more deserving than herself. But was she, slave-like, ever to crouch beneath the tyrant's lash? Were her children to be slaughtered without a murmur? Was the spirit of her ancient heroes fled for ever? No! swords had been girded on; arms had been raised. The Spirit of Liberty had spread her wings, and who should stay her flight? The cold might scoff, the worldly deride; the selfish and the calculating might aid her oppressor, to check a gigantic power, or preserve a visionary balance; but the noble and the good must pray for her success. The passionate longings of my childhood returned. Why might not I be a second, though a foreign Leonidas? At least she should have the aid of my arm, feeble as it was. Then came the remembrance that I was poor indeed! At that moment Lord Fitzallan touched my arm—'Here, Elliott! try your luck,' placing some notes before me! 'Make no scruple; my winnings have been great. Should you succeed, you can pay me again; and if



you lose, there is an end of it.' I looked at him in surprise; his cheeks were flushed, his eye bright with triumph and delight; there was nothing to hint at the agonies of gaming; and I thought not of looking at his adversary.

"One hundred pounds were before me. Could I double that it would equip me for Greece. 'Will you play with me?' said a pale thin young man, in a hurried anxious tone. There was a fever in my brain, a passion in my mind. I paused not—I took no time for thought; but bowed my assent to the stranger's wish. I did not even understand the game, and my playing was little short of madness. His Lordship explained the rules to me, and we began. Nothing could be more brilliant, more rapid than my success. I won all, against every chance, every calculation. My hundred pounds had gained two hundred more. What a sum! for one who had nothing, and who saw within his power the accomplishment of a strong desire. I had the prudence—I should say the selfishness—to wish to decline further play, but my antagonist proposed double or quits, and of course I could not refuse. Even then I felt little anxiety, my success had been too dazzling to permit me to doubt. We played, and the stake was mine. He gave me his note and left the room without speaking. Others urged me to play, but I was rich beyond my expectations. They praised my skill, and laughed at the doleful looks of my opponent; but I was not quite so intoxicated as to believe their flattery, or join in the laugh. Had my success been doubtful, or had I lost, the pride of conquering fortune, or the desperation of despair might have made me a confirmed gambler. But I knew nothing of a gambler's hopes and fears, and the value of my success had not been increased by anxiety. I paid Lord Fitzallan his loan, and finding he meant to return, left the house alone, never, I hope, to enter it more. Have I not then cause to be thankful for my success?"

Helen looked grave at this appeal. She had listened to his story from his spirited manner of relation, and as showing his character in a new light, with an interest too intense to allow her to interrupt him; but this conclusion was far from satisfactory. Such a termination might suit a common character, but she had fancied him a something more than that.

He saw her hesitation, and was hurt at it.

"I fear I have been hoping a too merciful judgment. Are you such a rigid censor? May not one solitary error be for-

given? May my circumstances plead no excuse? Will you not acquit me?"

"It is not for me to acquit or condemn, and the world—"

"But you judge not as the world," he said hastily; "and I have forfeited your esteem."

She was silent for a moment, then said, "you see more than is. I only hesitate at the ungraciousness of owning disappointment. I quarrelled with your first commencement, and you gave me a second. Will you do the same if I quarrel with your conclusion?"

He penetrated her meaning instantly.

"You wrong me, Miss St. Maur," he said proudly, "I had hoped my sad tale, and what you have known of me, might have saved me from such suspicion; but a gambler has no right to claim a charitable judgment," he added more humbly.

"Forgive me," she said earnestly, "it was the very interest your tale excited, which made me dislike its conclusion. You must tell me all; this was understood before you began."

"Not quite all," he replied, his manner resuming its former *naïveté* and animation. "What passed further is connected with one more unfortunate than myself, and whose grief must be respected. Suffice it that none of the money remained with me."

"Quite sufficient to prove you as noble as I thought you; but not to satisfy my curiosity. Was there any thing of a quarrel?" and she looked at him inquiringly.

He started at her words, and then his eyes flashed upon her with such fire that she withdrew her gaze in confusion.

"Who spoke of a quarrel, Miss St. Maur?" he asked in a tone that showed it required some effort to keep it calm.

She had not expected the question, and thought to discover if De Roos could have spoken falsely. She feared to occasion a quarrel by giving up her authority. To falsehood she never stooped, and there was nothing left but the assertion of female dignity.

"Your are a bold and free questioner, but we ladies hold ourselves excused from giving up a sister gossip. May be I dreamt it."

"Your pardon, if too bold; but you are no gossip, and would scarcely dream of gambling quarrels. The report owns De Roos for its author. I can read his genius in the tale—his superlative talent of grafting the false on the true, till the wisdom of a Solomon could scarcely decide on their respective

claims. He is daring as acute, or he durst not have breathed a word. May I ask when first you heard this? and what were the particulars?"

"Too much has already been said on the subject," she replied, alarmed at his warmth; "I never mentioned Mr. De Roos, and in courtesy, as well as to prevent mistake, I claim your silence?"

"Be not alarmed! believe me your delicacy shall be respected, with more even than a brother's care. Yet it is hard to know myself maligned without the power of defence. Under other circumstances, I would charge him with his perfidy in your presence. I suspect others have heard the same tale, with whom I should have no such scruple, but I cannot prove it. He would prejudice me in your eyes. Will you not then tell me what he said? that I may clear myself."

"I am no tale-bearer, and if I were, I simply heard there had been a quarrel."

"Then you shield the guilty, and deny the innocent the means of justification."

"You require no justification in my opinion; or could easily clear yourself by relating what really passed. There is nothing so very malignant in stating there was a quarrel."

"True! But there is a way of making a statement that insinuates guilt, and I read your looks but ill, if I wrong De Roos by the suspicion. Besides there was nothing that should have been called a quarrel; and how know I what other things he may have insinuated? Ha! my suspicions are correct," as he marked her changing cheek. "What said he more? Surely he never mentioned our former meetings, colouring them as he would wish? You are silent. Then it is so! De Roos shall find he may go too far! He shall retract the falsehood in your presence!"

"Is this your pledge of a few moments since?" asked Helen in alarm. Then added more calmly, "you have neither a right to question or interpret my silence; such conduct will make me regret my frankness to a stranger."

"A stranger! and no right to question! Then you condemn me unheard. I had hoped more from your generosity."

"And I far more calmness, considering your promise. Where are the proofs of my having condemned you unheard?"

"It is I only who have been unjust, and I blush for my violence. But can I believe you will always act thus generously?"

"Why not judge the future by the past?"

"Then you will never condemn me unheard, even though you should know the tale to be partly true, and see good cause to believe the remainder?"

"Why promises are awful things!" she said smiling; "and I seldom give them."

"Then I must still remain at the mercy of evil reporters!"

"No. Tell me all you may of this quarrel, which is no quarrel at all it seems; and of your former meetings with Mr. De Roos, and then you will have nothing to fear from any ugly tales hereafter."

"Of the quarrel you shall hear, since it is no longer a matter of delicacy, and you will, I am sure, pity as much as you condemn; but of my former meeting with De Roos, I cannot become the relater; at least the provocation must be still greater than it has been."

"I understand," interpreting his blush and hesitation; "and being convinced that I should hear the tale better told by any lips than yours, will show how a woman can for once control her curiosity. The cause is dismissed, and you quit the court in perfect innocence and honour. In gratitude, Mr. De Roos is to hear nothing of this matter; and you are to play the lamb, and not the lion."

"I will play anything you desire if you will give me the promise I asked."

"You would fain be despotic, and yet despotism is waning fast."

"You promise then?"

She smiled, but was silent:

"She did not speak.  
But then her very silence told consent,  
More surely than her speech had done."

She smiled again. "I never contradict, so now to your tale."

Again one of those bright Etna looks was beaming on her, and he began:

"I left Lord Fitzallan in the room, and descending the stairs, entered a long passage but dimly lit. A figure was leaning against a doorway a few paces before me. The light was too dull for me to distinguish clearly, but a deep breathing, and the attitude, convinced me the person was in pain. I hastened towards him, asked if he were ill, and offered assistance. He turned towards me, and never shall I forget his look of agony, the corpse-like cheek, the fiery eye, and the lip

compressed till the blood had started beneath the teeth. It was my adversary!

" 'Am I ill?' he exclaimed fiercely, as he recognised me. 'Why should you ask?—it matters not to you. Or perhaps you may think I may die before my debt is paid, or you came to boast your skill. Oh, it was well and nobly done! Not a shilling left! You robbed me of the very last, and then you took my bond. My bond! Follow and see how well it shall be paid!' and with a strange and mocking laugh, he rushed from the house before I could detain him. 'Robbed!' My passion rose at the word. Who had dared to apply such a term to me? And should I bear it patiently? I was not myself that night, and can never be sufficiently thankful that I was saved from deeper guilt. I rushed after him to demand an explanation, but it was some moments before I could undo the door; and when I passed into the open air, he whom I sought had disappeared, and a solitary watchman alone met my view. The night breeze blew upon my burning brow, and cooled the fever of my brain, whilst the holy calm of nature rebuked the fury of my passion, and better thoughts came over me. How should I dare to avenge a slighting word, when the Omnipotent bears so long in mercy with the deepest, darkest crimes? What had he said too? Could I deny the charge? I had neither sat down from idleness, nor amusement, nor excitement, nor absolute want; those poor excuses for a gambler. I had played for the express purpose of winning. My own heart condemned me. I loathed the money I had gained, and determined to restore it. I applied to the watchman for information, and followed a vague direction. After wandering for some time, I entered a gloomy court, and at the farthest extremity, nearly hid by the deep shadow of the houses, I beheld the figure of a man resting against the railing.

"But you are pale! It is indeed a sad tale; let me discontinue it."

"No! no! proceed! I should be more unworthy than I am of my many blessings, if I could shrink from the misery of others. Tell me all, and command me if I can aid the unhappy."

He looked at her a moment in admiring silence, and then continued:

"Uncertain whether it was Mr. Walsh, I was doubting if to proceed, when something in his hand glittering in the moonshine, and an exclamation of despair, urged me forward. It

was a pistol, and his finger was on the trigger as I dashed it to the ground. An instant more, and I had been too late. Thank heaven his blood rests not on my head! The force with which I dashed the fatal instrument from his hand made him stagger against the rails, but in a moment he recovered himself, and recognising me, sprang upon me with the fury of a madman. I cannot tell you how I soothed him, and made him believe in my friendly intentions; but before half an hour had passed, he was weeping like an infant on my shoulder, and blessing me for having saved him from self-destruction, though it was to bear more of misery than—new as I was to the world—I had even dreamt of. My solemn declaration never to use the money I had won, at length induced him to receive it back, and as I walked with him to his lodgings, I learnt his story. At the age of twenty, the supposed heir of a doting uncle, he had married a portionless cousin, for, though but an ensign in a foot regiment, his liberal allowance made this no act of imprudence. His uncle seemed to love his Mary—who could do otherwise?—and for three years his happiness was almost perfect; but at that time his uncle died, leaving all his property except two hundred pounds, to his cook, whom he had secretly married. Thus was Mr. Walsh left with only two hundred pounds and the pay of a Lieutenant, to support a delicate wife, and an increasing family. For some time they struggled on tolerably, till he was reduced to half-pay.

“He came up to town to seek assistance from his friends; it was refused. His wife pined under the idea that his marriage had caused this misery; the children, now increased to five, were most of them unhealthy; he had a severe and expensive illness, and debts were unavoidably incurred. He had before borrowed money on his commission, and it was part of the sum arising from its sale, and that of their last comforts, for they had nothing but necessaries left, which he had lost to me. It was not enough to pay his debts, and even if it had been, there was nothing but starvation before them. As he passed the gambling-house, he heard a gentleman vaunting of success. It was a desperate hope—he entered. The hope proved fallacious—and he lost every thing.

“Could the most confirmed gambler have heard him tell his tale of hope and fear, and agony; the gloom of despair; the fever of desperation; the horror of the moment of meditated murder—even such might have paused on his dark road to ruin.

" 'Amid all my sorrows,' he concluded, 'I have had the blessing never to hear reproach from the lip, or read it in the eye of my own angel wife: and yet at times her very love has been such agony, I would have changed it, if I could, for coldness or for censure; and then the next moment I have clung to the idea of her unchilled affection, as to a recompense for every ill. You will not tell her of this evening?' he said eagerly, though in confusion. 'It would alarm her and I would not she should think ill of me.'

"We turned into a dark and wretched court, and stood before a miserable habitation. He looked at the house, and then at me, and I believe the thought of introducing a stranger into such an abode, made him more than ever feel its wretchedness. But this was no time for shame or hesitation. There was a stir in the house, the faint cry of a child, and then the feeble voice of a woman pleading for pity.

"We rushed in, and the scene was painful beyond description. Four sickly-looking children were lying in one bed, without a curtain, or a head. The whole furniture of the room was in the same scanty proportion, half shown, and half concealed, by one poor and unsnuffed candle. Two stern-looking men were speaking in harsh accents, as we entered; but what moved me most was a lovely female, worn almost to a shadow, sitting in a high-backed chair of the coarsest make, and with difficulty preventing herself from fainting, whilst every now and then, in the sweetest accents, she begged for a little time to be allowed her. The gentle entreaty was met by a refusal so harsh, that it required some strength to prevent the husband from felling the intruder to the earth. With the yielding of despair, to save his delicate wife and sickly children from having bed and chair taken from under them, he divided the money between his merciless creditors, and bade them begone; and as the door closed after them he gave one melancholy look round the apartment, and then hid his face in his hands. 'Henry, dear Henry!' said his beautiful wife, throwing her arms round his neck. 'I am quite happy now you are with me; you were so long, love! I feared some ill.' He withdrew his hands as she spoke, looked into her face, and then folded her in his arms. In the midst of all his misery the wealthiest, the proudest, might have envied him that woman's love! When I went the next day, I found even worse than I had expected. Mr. Walsh was in prison at the suit of the person who had lent money on his commission, and his wife and children were

with him. I returned to Lord Fitzallan, and used every effort to persuade him to assist them.

"No; they might be impostors; I was too kind-hearted, too simple, and could easily be deceived; besides, he was poor, and had other uses for his money. He could inquire. He was particularly engaged.' 'Out of his winnings the night before.' 'Where were mine?' I told him; he called me a simple enthusiast to my face—a foolish dolt behind my back. He then, as if yielding to my entreaty, offered me a small sum to venture that night, but only on that condition. I refused, and urged him to give up the practice, with all the ardour and simplicity of youth, when, in the dawn of life, receiving every impression with the force of novelty, it understands not the difference of a shade, but with its own bold and noble character, *trop prononcé* for after-life, claims from all the acquiescence, which it does not understand can be denied. The man of the world was not to be moved by the arguments of a raw youth, and we parted in anger, for I suspected him of a wish to entangle me in a passion for gaming.

"It was the first time such misery had come before my view, and I had not the power of relieving it. All I could do for Mr. Walsh I did. I applied to a relation, at his request, and received and took to him a small sum; but it was ungraciously given, and I fear he can expect no more.

"Two days after this, Lord Fitzallan requested I would visit De Roos, as he was obliged to leave London on business, promising me shortly a definitive answer concerning Mr. Stanton's bequest. Had I known that De Roos and myself had met before, which, from never having heard his name, I did not, nothing should have induced me to become his guest. Yet I must say, on my first arrival, a dislike less rooted than mine, must have yielded to his fascinating courtesy; but I believe, in the revulsion of disappointed expectations, I may be verging on suspicion. At present, I suspect the only point on which we agree is the wish of avoidance; and yet, by some strange chance, we are much together."

"Many thanks for your sad tale! and think not I shall ever wrong you again," said Helen, after she had turned away to conceal her tears. "Have you heard no more of Mr. Walsh."

I had a letter from him this morning. His creditor has relented, and he has left the prison; but his small supply is nearly exhausted, his wife very delicate, and no means of future support. One who had received favours from his fa-



mily in former days, has offered to admit him to a share of the profits of a mercantile concern, if he can procure three hundred pounds, and will take part of the trouble; and he wrote to me, partly in compliance with my wish, and partly to ask if I thought the relative who had supplied the little before, would be likely to advance the money on his bond, for repayment when in his power. I fear the application will be vain, and yet I cannot bear to destroy this only hope."

"Have you told all this to Mr. De Roos? He might assist him."

"I can owe De Roos no favour even for another, and I could not brook that he should mock at Walsh's gentle wife."

"Mock! surely you judge him harshly!"

He looked for a moment intently at the eager questioner, before he replied—"I judge by the past."

Helen was silent for a while, for there was food for thought in the conduct of these two young men. Each hinted evil of the other, and each in a manner accordant with his different character. The one insinuated the accusation, with the careless ease of a man of the world, who had seen too much of guilt to hold it in such deep abhorrence as in the innocent days of childhood. The other seemed to pour forth his accusations, not by will, but by force; urged on by the indignation of a young unhacknied spirit. It was strange she should become the confidante of the ill opinion each held of the other! There was enough in this circumstance to interest, and make her desirous of reading the riddle; but she was too wise to make this desire apparent, and too prudent to increase the irritation between them.

A deep sigh roused her from her reverie; she looked, and met Elliot's intent gaze withdrawn instantly in confusion.

"I believe I have been rather oblivious," she said, with a smile, thinking his melancholy look arose from sympathy with Mr. Walsh. "But though silent in speech, I have been eloquent in thought. Mrs. Throgmorton would be vexed if her beautiful inkstand, with its elegant appurtenances, were not admired and employed. Suppose you write me the address of your friend, the young clergyman, as I keep a list of worthies;" and she placed a gold pen in his hand, and some embossed paper before him.

He wrote and with some surprise, saw she did the same.

"Now for an exchange!" and she took his paper, and presented him with her's.

He read in delighted surprise; it was a request to a gentleman in town to pay the bearer five hundred pounds.

He tried to thank her, but the task was too difficult to be accomplished without stammering and hesitation.

"It is I should thank you, for affording me the means to make others happy. I never could resist a love-tale, and theirs seems true affection. But there are some conditions annexed to this gift; you must not mention it; and as Mr. Walsh must not spare means to restore health to his gentle wife, he must promise to call on the gentleman to whom this is addressed, should he require further assistance. Assure him he need fear neither question nor repulse."

"What sonnet is that?" inquired Alford, looking over the paper, and preventing further conversation.

"Psha! only a name. But come, or we shall lose this quadrille; I will lead Miss Grey to her chaperon, and then be ready."

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### CHAPTER III.

*Détruire l'amour, un moyen unmanquable est de jeter du ridicule sur l'objet qui l'inspire.*

They prais'd thy diamond's lustre rare;  
 Match'd with thine eyes I thought it faded.  
 They prais'd the pearls that bound thy hair:  
 I only saw the locks they braided.  
 They talk'd of wealthy dower, and land,  
 And titles, of high birth the token;  
 I thought of Lucy's heart and hand,  
 Nor knew the sense of what was spoken.  
 And yet, if ranked in fortune's roll,  
 I might have learn'd their choice unwise,  
 Who rate the dower above the soul,  
 And Lucy's diamonds o'er her eyes.

WALTER SCOTT.

As Mr. Elliott and his fair partner were making their way to the dancing-room, the following conversation reached their ears:

"If not engaged, Mr. De Roos, will you allow me to introduce you to my niece?"

"Nothing would have given me greater pleasure, my dear Mrs. Daniell, but I am unfortunately engaged several deep. Should I be free towards the end of the evening, I shall claim the pleasure."

The lady retired, perfectly satisfied with the answer, and sought a partner elsewhere.

"I wish, De Roos, you would teach me how to get out of a scrape as you do, without suspicion. I have been obliged to dance with two gawkies already," remarked a gentleman near; "your nonchalance is inimitable."

"Practice and self-possession are every thing," replied De Roos, joining in the laugh his clever escape had occasioned.

"Mr. De Roos," said Mrs. Throgmorton, "you begged for the honour of my daughter's hand some time during the evening, and I have secured it for this dance."

The gentleman expressed his pleasure in animated terms, and led the lady to the quadrille.

Mr. Elliott caught Helen's look of contempt, and all his animation returned on the instant.

"How very lovely Miss St. Maur looks this evening, and how gracefully she dances."

"Yes! she puts me in mind of my horse Conqueror, that won at Newmarket. Now I think of it, you never saw him; suppose—"

"Oh, I must go and speak to Mr. Daniell;" and away hurried the first speaker, muttering as he went. "Miss St. Maur like his horse Conqueror! Not seen him! Why I spent two hours in the hot stable three days since."

"Who is that dancing with Miss St. Maur?" inquired Mr. Dalton of Alford; "his is the animation of mind, rather than mere manner. Were I a young coxcomb, and like half the county, aspiring to her favour, I should tremble for my chance."

"La, Mr. Dalton," said Miss Carleton, "you always say such strange things! Why that's only Mr. Elliott, a poor dependant on Mr. De Roos, and he is as ugly as sin; and Lady Catharine calls him *Ursa Major*."

"I pretend not to dispute your capacity to decide on the hideousness of sin," replied the caustic gentleman: then, talking to himself, "that must be the Major Urser of Mrs. Jones."

"The same," said the laughing Alford; "and he is anxious to thank you for the staff appointment."

"You are in no mood to-night to distrust the wisdom of

grey heads," with an emphasis on the word *grey*, and a glance towards a corner where a fair face was just visible behind an orange tree: "so, take my word for it, that the young man has a mind for any station, however exalted;" and the old gentleman turned away with a sly smile at all the confusion he had occasioned.

The supper table was loaded with every delicacy in season and out of season, and amidst all assembled, no party could have been found more contented with themselves and their neighbours than that which Alford had insisted should be grouped together. Miss Mason was too delighted at having had such a pleasant partner, and being handed in to supper by a lord, to quarrel with his attentions to Miss Grey; who in her turn decided that a ball was no such disagreeable thing as she had imagined; whilst our heroine and her partner were each moment more pleased with the congeniality in thoughts and feelings, and the powers of mind each discovered in the other.

"A silver sixpence for your thoughts, Mr. De Roos," said Miss Carleton, who had, by dint of great manœuvring, procured a seat beside him. "I have spoken to you three times, and you have not given me an answer, but kept looking over towards that Mr. Elliott. Never mind if he should do any thing awkward, you cannot help it, you know, and Miss St. Maur will not let people laugh at her *protégé*. She seems to have taken a great fancy to him, and Mr. Dalton thinks he stands a good chance."

Had the young lady sought revenge for his inattention, no malice could have instructed her better; and he favoured her with such an equivocal look, that she stared in amazement. Her wonder restored his composure. "Will you allow me the pleasure of taking wine with you? I have been suffering much for the last few moments, and fear I have been inattentive."

"Oh la, you do look pale. Dear me! I am so shocked you cannot think. Doctor Musters," she almost screamed to a dapper little man at the other end of the table, "Mr. De Roos is taken ill! do pray come and prescribe for him. If he should want bleeding I shall certainly faint! Are you better now?"

Had Mr. De Roos possessed the wishing cap of the fairy tale, Miss Carleton might have found herself transported to some desert wild, with Messrs. Elliott and Musters to contribute to her amusement; but fortunately for all the parties

concerned, Mr. De Roos possessed no superhuman means of accomplishing his wishes, and the young lady was preserved from so fearful a fate, to endure one but little preferable.

"What do you feel, my dear sir?" cried the little doctor to his new patient, with great glee, trying to possess himself of his pulse; "where is the pain?" There was a look and movement of annoyance, and a flash of passion so slight, so fleeting, that few observed it.

"A pain near my heart, nothing more: and I am quite well now," replied Mr. De Roos, with a becoming degree of gratitude and confusion for the interest he had excited, and a careful withdrawal of his hand from the doctor's clutch.

This equivocal answer failed not to excite, perhaps, as intended, considerable merriment amongst the company in general, with a caustic remark from Mr. Dalton, "that such pains seldom lasted long;" and various witty remarks from young gentlemen, with corresponding smiles and blushes from young ladies.

"Are you really better, though?" inquired Miss Carleton in a tender tone.

"Thank you, quite well now. I am subject to these sudden attacks of the heart."

"Then I suppose it is the same you had the first day you saw me?"

The laughter was renewed, and the invalid, vexed as he was, could scarcely retain his gravity, whilst above the general noise could be distinguished Mr. Dalton's sarcastic recommendation of a "a clerical instead of a physical doctor for a cure of all disorders of the heart."

"La! now, how can you all be so silly? I am sure I did not mean anything."

"No one ever suspects you of such an indiscretion," said Mr. Dalton; and the young lady's vexation became real, as the laughter rose higher than before.

Having no inclination that his name should be coupled with Miss Carleton's and made a subject of ridicule, Mr. De Roos, by offering to help Mrs. Throgmorton to a pine, and then commenting on its appearance, soon succeeded in turning the conversation on the general beauty of the fruit adorning the banquet.

"Elliott," said he, across the table, "you had better send me that pine, and let me help Miss St. Maur. Bad carving spoils these superlative luxuries, and I have had more experience in cutting them up than you. I flatter myself I have a talent for it."

To the unobservant there was nothing but easy good nature in this address; to the more acute there was an assumption of superiority, the more galling as being too slight to be noticed, and the more unpleasant to one unaccustomed to society, as directing all looks towards him. There was an encounter of eyes across the table, and De Roos turned away for an instant to address his fair neighbour. Then desiring a servant to bring the pine, he spoke again:

"Do pray! my dear fellow, let me have it. I cannot bear to see you cut it up in that style; it makes me quite nervous."

An angry retort rose to Elliott's lips, for he read something sinister in the speech, but he checked it, and was silent. Alford was too much engaged with Miss Grey to notice his embarrassment; Mr. Dalton and Helen were the only two who felt for his situation; the former was too curious too see how he could extricate himself, to offer any assistance; and the latter, though indignant at the attack, and able and willing to defend him if absolutely necessary, shrunk from the task with a reluctance never felt before, and appealed to him with a look for his own exertions. The servant's hand was on the dish, and the triumph of De Roos seemed complete. A sullen and awkward compliance, or an angry denial, was all that was wanting to decide the point, and his eyes shone with more than their usual brilliancy. But the brightest anticipation may be disappointed. That appealing look had not been lost, and he spoke with a tone and a manner almost as self-possessed as his enemy's.

"No, no, De Roos! you may be an inimitable dissector, but I shall not resign the high honour awarded me without an appeal. What say you, ladies and gentlemen?" appealing to his party, "my plain way of cutting up, or De Roos's more insidious and courtly mode of destruction."

"Your plain way. We hate any thing insidious," answered Alford and Mr. Dalton, whilst Helen's look was triumph indeed.

De Roos shrugged his shoulders, bowed, and gave up the point; and most of the company came to the conclusion, before they left the table, that this consideration had been for his dependant, and effected somehow or other by Miss St. Maur to please him. It is a mark of real genius to turn a defeat into a triumph!

"Why, Susy, I don't see that Mr. Elliott cuts up a pine worse than other people."

"It must be so, Mamma! or Mr. de Roos would not have

observed it. He is sadly deficient in that delicate tact, that insinuating softness which bespeaks the sensibility of a sympathetic mind." Such a reply and such an authority were unanswerable.

Mr. De Roos was one of the first to enter the ball-room and winning his way through "nods and becks, and wreathed smiles," he took his station beside Miss St. Maur, who was too much fascinated by his conversation to think of much beside.

"They are forming for a quadrille, I see; will you honour me with your hand? I had hoped to attend you in to supper; but the Fates were cruel, and I could only pity you for having such a neighbour, and admire the good nature with which you bore the infliction."

"It is a sad thing that your pity and admiration should have been wasted; I was more than content."

"I know not how to thank you! Will you permit me to lead you to the dance?"

"I should have been very happy; but I am engaged several deep."

He looked the disappointment he felt.

"I know I must not presume to ask to whom, or to how many."

"I never utter a falsehood, even to get rid of a disagreeable partner, and will therefore answer."

A something rather emphatic in her tone, and a coldness in her manner, set Mr. De Roos thinking, and a moment's thought was sufficient for one so acute.

"Pardon my unwarrantable question, for which the depth of my disappointment can alone plead excuse. What a noble rebuke is your conduct to my selfishness, in having declined the hand of one little favoured by beauty or fortune! But who can hope to equal you? As a proof of my repentance, I place myself at your disposal for the rest of the evening. Who shall be my partner for the next quadrille?"

All this was very flattering, and the look and manner were in strict accordance with the words; besides, the world considered a falsehood in such an affair perfectly justifiable, therefore his frank avowal of error was the more pleasing; yet she refused the task assigned her.

"Nay, Mr. De Roos, it is not for me to control your opinions or actions. As you see your errors, you can yourself amend them," and she walked to the other side of the room, for the purpose of introducing Elliott to Miss Mason.

"Mrs. De Roos may pine for the offer rejected by Miss St. Maur," muttered the person she had left to his own thoughts.

"Do me the honour of introducing me to Miss Mason, Elliott."

"Miss Mason, Mr. De Roos," replied that gentleman in surprise; a surprise increased when he heard him ask her hand for the succeeding dance.

"A reform, or a scheme?" questioned Mr. Dalton aloud, as if interpreting Helen's look.

"The charge of hypocrisy is a penalty the erring must pay when they would mend," remarked De Roos humbly.

"Do not mind Mr. Dalton's words," said Helen, "he knows he is a privileged person, and keeps up those privileges lest they should be lost. He can hear the grass grow, with Wordsworth; in short, can see, hear, and feel, what few other simple mortals can; not only what is, but what is not; and, having once been in a court of justice, he has considered himself ever since bound to proclaim at all times, and in all places, 'the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth;' yet to those who have nothing to hide, he is the kindest and truest of friends," she added, looking up in his face with all the love and confidence she had placed in him from childhood.

"A sop for Cerberus!" twinkling his piercing grey eyes to disperse a tear. "I am not the only one who takes advantage of privileges, it seems to me; she knows I never quarrelled with her."

"Ay, but then you know I never give you reason."

"Not by your description just now?"

"Not at all! You know it is the character you wish to bear."

"Say rather what the vices of the world have forced upon me."

"I know of old it is of no use to argue with you on this point,—

'A man convinced against his will,  
Is of the same opinion still.'

So I shall not waste words, but to the dance, if my partner have not forgotten his engagement."

"That could not be!" said De Roos. Then looking round, "I see he is detained by that horrid bore. 'A Marmion to the rescue, ho!'"

"What do you think of that young fellow?" enquired Mr. Dalton, abruptly.



"Nothing! Young ladies never think of young fellows."

"Psha! The matter may be more serious than you choose to think. Frankly, what is your opinion of his character?"

"Frankly then, I have not quite made up my mind. There is a mystery about him that I have not fathomed, and I can only say what I said oracularly to Alford, he is better or worse, than most think him."

"This shall not baffle me. What do you think of him?"

"Barbarous man! Well then, as my Lord Marston would say, I am inclined to think—and imagine—that is to indulge a *soupçon*, '*Que jamais visage ne fut moins baromètre.*'"

"And yet you allow him to engross your attention!"

"First, my curiosity is engaged to develop the mystery; then he is the very *causers* of *causeurs*. He always divines the matter on which you would soonest converse, listens as if you were the Dalah Lama and he one of your worshippers, or you were uttering the oracle on which his fate depended; or only differs from you to be convinced by your argument. In short, insinuates more delicate and delicious flattery in one five minutes, than those other dull spirits," glancing round, "could utter plainly in five days."

"Helen! Helen!" shaking his head, "take care you do not prove the truth of Byron's satirical line:—

'Maidens, like moths, are ever caught by glare.'"

"But we have their own assertion that Poets best succeed in fiction, and hence the popularity of that line. Do not be alarmed, my kind Mentor, this will prove a matter of the mind, not of the heart.

'On n'est que plus près du danger,  
Quand on croit n'avoir rien à craindre.'"

Her partner's approach prevented any further discussion, and he led her off, smiling as she passed at Mr. Dalton's awful shakings of the head. Mr. De Roos not only danced with Miss Mason, and made the agreeable, but afterwards handed her and her aunt to their carriage. "Will you not introduce me to your friend Miss Grey?" he inquired of our heroine, on his return. "There is a something of almost angel sweetness in her countenance, which cannot but interest, though her's is not my favourite style of beauty. I prefer more of mind and character. Elliott seems wonderfully taken with her; but we seldom agree as to beauty or anything else. I

hope it is so, for I understand she will have a fortune, and as he has nothing, he must look for a bride with a portion, and she having no parents to interfere, and no station to maintain, birth might be no consideration to her."

"Miss Grey has no fortune. But what is Mr. Elliott's birth?"

"There is too much mystery to suppose it good, but he always shuns the subject, and either cannot or will not say any thing about it. I pity him, for I fear he is ambitious, and must be disappointed: neither his talents or manners are calculated to balance a doubtful birth."

The approach of Miss Grey, and her subsequent introduction, prevented a reply in words, and even Mr. De Roos was puzzled to determine the meaning of a smile.

"Admire the justice of my punishment, Miss St. Maur, Miss Grey refuses to honour me with her hand."

"I am just going," said Miss Grey in a sweet voice.

"Going Annie! Do stay another dance, and be my *vis-à-vis*, again?"

"If you would condescend to give me a good character, perhaps Miss Grey would honour me."

"Mr. De Roos is the most delightful of talkers and the most polite of listeners, and no one can converse with him ten minutes, without being fascinated *de lui-et de lui-même*."

If there were anything equivocal in this character, any playful satire, the gentleman either did not or would not perceive it, but expressed the warmest thanks, as if delighted with the eulogy, and again pleaded, though in vain, for the carriage was at the door.

"But you have not found it so very disagreeable, that you will not stay," said Helen.

"Oh, no! for you, and Lord Alford, and Mr. Elliott, have been so kind."

"So kind that you will dance again at Helen's fête?" said Alford.

"What do you mean? My fête is only for the poor."

"I beg your pardon! it is for the rich too. I have been besieged by all the room to induce you to invite rich as well as poor, and I have pledged myself it shall be so. In fact, my character for persuasion rests on the decision; so there can be no debate."

"How could you play me such a wild trick, I only celebrate my coming of age, in compliance with the wish of my parents, and as a thing done time immemorial in our family;

and as I have no one to assist me in such an undertaking, you really must pay the penalty of your presumption."

"I cannot possibly submit to such a degradation. They all say they will give you no trouble, but be quite satisfied with roast beef and plumb pudding, and you have only to appoint three or four aids-de-camp, and we will arrange every thing for you. Carleton offers to ride a race with his horse Conqueror on the occasion; Miss Jones has indited a sonnet with delicious sympathies, souls-harrowing emotions, and so forth; and Mrs. Carleton has promised her advice."

"Three good and sufficient reasons, I am sure, for declining the plan."

"No! no! you must not: the whole county expects it, and even my mother says she will go if possible; it is bringing the rich and the poor together, and encouraging a kindly feeling between them."

"Then I am to have no voice in the matter; it seems?"

"None whatever; so you have only to choose your aides-de-camp."

"If I might venture to solicit for the honour, on the plea of having assisted to arrange such an affair before?" said De Roos.

"Have you? then you shall be one certainly, and I of course; and who shall be the others? Oh, there is Ruthven!"

"Stay, Alford!" interrupted Helen, "you must allow me some little rule. I have known Mr. De Roos too short a time to think of imposing such a task upon him; of the assistance of yourself and my cousin, I shall gladly avail myself."

"I should not have presumed. But from having assisted at one before!" pleaded De Roos.

"Never mind! I dare say Helen's decision is according to etiquette and all that: but I do not see why we should be deprived of your services; so you and Elliott shall be sort of supernumerary aides-de-camp, assisting in the work without acquiring the name."

"I shall be too happy to assist Miss St. Maur to object to any conditions, and I suppose I may say the same for you, Elliott."

"I will not trouble you. Miss St. Maur can have no doubt on the subject."

"Well, then, it is a settled thing; and, remember, Helen, there is to be no change; and, as I am superior officer, do you, De Roos, conduct Mrs. Roberts to her carriage, whilst I hand Miss Grey."

Thus was the whole matter settled; if not quite contrary to the wishes, almost without the consent of our heroine. She would have remonstrated, but feared, by so doing, to give the affair an appearance of greater importance. A word in private to Alford, and a determination not to consult De Roos, she thought would answer her purpose better than a dispute in a ball-room; but she had yet to learn, that a polite but determined perseverance, might win its will despite her wishes.

"You must introduce me to Mr. Elliott," said Mr. Dalton, "for I have an apology to make him."

"And I have my thanks to offer for a staff-appointment," replied he, laughing, for Helen had explained to him the strange mixture of kindness and severity that compounded Mr. Dalton's character.

"You deserve it, at any rate, for taking my pleasantry so well; but I did not even know your name when I answered that teasing woman."

"As you have declined my offer of introducing a partner, Mr. Elliott, I shall commission you to inspire Mr. Dalton with some of your charitable sentiments;" and Helen left them to join the dancers.

"If I were young," said Mr. Dalton, "Helen should be mine, though I toiled as a galley-slave to win her."

"She would, indeed, be a reward for slavery itself; but, with her beauty, birth, and fortune, she will, doubtless, match highly."

"Very highly! for she looks for worth and sense. Helen St. Maur will never sell herself for gold or title."

The young man made no reply, but indulged in a reverie.

"Umph!" cried Mr. Dalton, in so loud a tone as to startle his companion, and destroy the beautiful tissue of golden dreams which he was weaving.

"What did you say, Sir?"

"Nothing! I was only thinking of Icarus."

"Well, Tindal, what think you of the heiress?"

"What all young men must think of the heiress of ten thousand a year. Why, her pearls would be a fortune to a poor man, and yet report says they are not a tenth part of the family jewels: half a dozen of us have determined on entering the lists, though they pretend she is invulnerable. She may keep her heart, only give me her hand; though she is a fine creature, certainly. What say you, Mr. Elliott; do you mean to try your chance for jewels, woods, and consols, with beauty into the bargain?"

"Shame on the tongue could name her beauty and her jewels in the same breath; and fouler shame on the heart that could balance her fortune with her love."

"Hey day!" exclaimed Mr. Tindal, "what glowing cheeks and flashing eyes. Some raw country youth, I conclude, dreaming of unfading love, union of hearts, bliss in a cottage, &c. &c. Well no one need fear him as a rival, at any rate; for the women do like handsome men," surveying his really fine person in an opposite glass, "and a romantic heir-ess is a thing out of nature."

"Who is that tall thin man in spectacles?"

"I think some one said it was a Mr. Wilkins. Was it you, Mr. Johnson, whom I saw speaking to him?"

"Oh dear, no! thank goodness; I know no one of the name of Wilkins," replied that gentleman, elevating himself a little more than usual on his toes, and joining in the laugh, which he never dreamt was to ridicule his folly, not to applaud his wit.

"La! don't you know!" cried Mrs. Jones; "why that is the great Ornithogilum."

"Ornithologist, mamma?" whispered her daughter, with a slight frown; then turning again to her gallant partner, she continued her former conversation.

"How I envy you, Captain Montague Melville, the rapture of treading in the paths of glory, and emulating the brilliant achievements of the heroes of old; shadowing the lustre of a Bayard and a Black Prince, and gilding your name with the undying glories of renown. How you must long for a war, to flesh your maiden sword! how your heart must thrill at

'The rapture of the victory, the triumph, and the scorn?'

Captain Montague Melville did not feel all the sublime rapture these things should inspire, but he bowed, appeared much flattered, and, despite a decided preference for a peace-campaign, attempted to look as enthusiastically heroic, as a round, fair, unmeaning face, with a snub nose, and light hair and eyes, would allow.

"I am sorry to hear Mr. Mahon is ill!" said Mr. Johnson, desirous of further enacting the wit; "the *tic dolooureux*, I understand," glancing round for a laugh.

Mrs. Mahon coloured, and then turned pale.

"I fear you have not lost your deafness, Mr. Johnson. Mr. Mahon is suffering from a severe head-ache," said our heroine pointedly, aware the rather old young gentleman entertained

a great horror of being supposed liable to any of the infirmities of age.

"It was nothing but a cold, and has been gone some time, said the abashed little man, shrinking back, and still more vexed when he saw Helen pay the Mahons particular attention.

"Mr. Mahon ill, is he! oh dear, I am so sorry! suffering from a severe fall, I understand," sneered Miss Carleton, who detested Mrs. Mahon; "I will tell Dr. Masters to call on him to-morrow morning;" and, without waiting an answer, she turned again to the dance.

"How well your daughter looks this evening!" remarked Mrs. Jones, in her most fawning way to Mrs. Carleton, whose stately demeanour always awed her; "and you can't think how Lord Alford admires her. He says she is *entêlé*, and quite jolly all over."

"I really do not understand you, Mrs. Jones," replied Mrs. Carleton, reddening, and drawing up her long neck, to look still longer; for, priding herself on her own bony figure, the embonpoint of her daughter made this speech more than a little annoying. "There must be some mistake; Lord Alford would scarcely make such a remark on my daughter."

"There is no mistake, I assure you; and he admires your turban as much, and said it was very superb, and something about heaping a horse upon a lion, which I did not quite understand."

"Nor I, either!" replied the highly offended Mrs. Carleton, rising to the very height of her grandeur, and looking as large as possible, to check the titter which was fast expanding into a laugh. Then casting a scathing look upon Mrs. Jones, she said in her most pompous manner, "Lord Alford may call this wit, but I say it is impertinence."

"What do you say it is?" inquired the culprit himself, who had arrived in time to enjoy the mischief occasioned by the ignorance and mistakes of Mrs. Jones, and who could scarcely speak for laughing.

The highly offended lady gave no other answer but a withering glance, and swept by him with a regal step.

During the merriment this scene occasioned the music ceased, and a conversation, carried on in a recess near, between two persons half concealed by the drapery of a curtain, became audible.

"It is all true, I assure you; for Mrs. Thomas told me herself, and she had it from Mrs. Johnson, who heard it from

Mrs. Jones, who had learnt all about it—Mr. Mahon is to go to gaol to-morrow, and he has threatened to shoot himself, and cut his throat twice; and there are four men obliged to remain always with him; and Mrs. Mahon went down on her knees to the bailiffs to let her and her daughters come to the ball, and vowed she would poison herself if they did not consent. So one of the bailiffs came with them to be sure she did not run away with the jewels; and as they were obliged to be civil, Miss Mahon danced the second dance with him, and”—

“Hush! hush! Mrs. Mahon is close,” cried the other, looking from behind the curtain.

Mrs. Mahon had borne all the sneers and inuendoes of the evening with a calmness that, in a better cause, would have deserved the name of heroism; but this public and exaggerated *exposé* was too much for her fortitude. She would have passed it off as a joke, but her power was weaker than her will: her laugh became hysterical; the colour deserted her cheek; and she would have fallen, but for the prompt assistance of Helen and Mr. Elliott. She was taken into an adjoining room; but it was long ere the endeavours of our heroine and her daughters could restore her to any degree of calmness. Adversity, a bitter, an agonizing draught even to the religious, was a shock and a destroying tempest to such a worldly mind as hers, and it was a sad thing to listen to her wild and almost frenzied ravings.

Her younger daughter, with all the buoyant spirits of youth, and owing her first ball to the circumstance, could not be expected to feel the full extent of the misfortune; whilst Caroline, with a deeper cause for grief than any guessed at, and feeling with acuteness the force of the blow, and foreseeing all the misery of the future, showed, in this hour of trial, the calm resignation of the Christian.

But Helen, the flattered heiress, the courted beauty, looked like the ministering angel of the party. Her tears mingled with those of Mrs. Mahon and her daughters; her gentle remonstrances soothed the former, and her smiles and kindness won all to hope.

After a time Mrs. Mahon became calmer, and wished to return home, but dreaded the taking leave or encountering the looks of the unfeeling. Helen promised to apologise for her, and then left the room to inquire for her carriage.

“Can I be of any use to you?” said Mr. Elliott, meeting her near the door. “I lingered here, thinking I might.”

"Thank you! thank you! Inquire for my servant, and tell him to have Mrs. Mahon's carriage brought to the side-door, with as little bustle as possible. Do not tell any one she is going; but, if you can, bring Alford or Mr. Dalton to help to support her to her carriage, for she is still faint."

"A few minutes after there was a knock at the door, and Alford and Elliott announced all was ready.

"Send them away, I cannot see any one," cried Mrs. Mahon.

"We are only come to hand you to the carriage, which is at the side-door, unknown to any," said both gentlemen in a breath.

Their kind manner quieted her distress, and Helen leading the way through some dim passages and empty rooms, the carriage departed with its freight, remarked by few.

"Helen, you forget yourself in the distresses of others," said Alford, looking at her pale cheeks. "Sit down here a few minutes, and recover yourself, whilst I get you a glass of wine."

Before he could finish speaking, the chair was brought, and Elliott had gone for the wine.

"Mr. Dalton," she said, when she had re-entered the ball-room, "I know you are an early riser. Will you drive me over to Bensted to-morrow by ten, and lend your assistance to settle something for poor Mr. Mahon."

"Psha! I suppose you mean to be such a fool as to help them, and then expect gratitude. I tell you there is no such thing, and I will have no hand in deceiving you. She will supplant you by manœuvring the next day, and put your house in confusion by meddling."

"This from you! when they are in such distress?"

"Nonsense! you want to make me as great a fool as yourself. Well, I will go, just for the pleasure of telling them what I think of them."

"Oh, certainly! for no other reason in the world," smiling acily. "Now, Alford, do find where Mrs. Throgmorton is, that I may say good night and retire. I hope you have found it a pleasant ball, Mr. Elliott."

"Pleasant! What a word! It will colour my future fate, for good or ill: which remains to be seen."

"You forget I have already predicted you bright fortunes."

"I will hold that prediction as an omen of success, and this as its token," picking up a sprig of orange flower, which had fallen from her hand, and his cheek glowed with more than



a healthful crimson, reading a deeper meaning than was intended.

"The Elliotts and Armstrongs ride thieves a'a! as in olden times, I see," remarked Mr. Dalton.

"May I not hope for your hand now, Mrs. St. Maur," entreated De Roos, "I thought your absence would have been eternal."

"The scene I have just witnessed must prevent all further idea of gayety for the evening."

"I fear your health will suffer from the nobleness of your nature," he said, changing his tone in instant accordance to her humour.

"Not at all. It is good for me to witness scenes of sorrow, that I may be grateful for my innumerable blessings."

"Good night, Helen!" said Lady Catharine, as she passed on her way to the carriage. "I congratulate you on the title you have acquired. The gentlemen call you the 'Refuge for the Destitute,' and all the bores and beggars reckon on you as a *dernier ressort*."

"It is fortunate they have such a refuge," replied Helen, smiling; "Good night."

"Did you see any thing particular in Miss St. Maur's conduct to Ruthven?" inquired De Roos of Elliott, when they had nearly reached Colville Lodge."

"No! Why do you ask?"

"Because they say, with his doubtful birth, he had the presumption to aspire to her hand, and she was obliged to repress his impertinence rather pointedly. She neither seeks for wealth or rank, I understand; but no consideration will induce her to overlook a clear descent—a grandfather at least, if not a great one. I thought you might have observed something of this."

"I saw nothing of the sort," replied his companion as coldly, appearing at the moment to be most intently occupied in watching the effect of the moon-beams on a piece of water; no singular occupation for an artist. Perhaps his ignorance of the matter was less extraordinary than his knowledge would have been.

Let it not be supposed these were the only two of that gay company, who made our heroine a subject of discourse on their return from the lively scene. All the world, (every one knows who "all the world" means,) decided that De Roos was likely to prove the favoured lover, and that Elliott was considered an object of pity and protection by Miss St. Maur, for his sake.

## CHAPTER IV.

"The limits of the sphere of dream,  
The bounds of true and false are past;  
Lead us on, thou wand'ring gleam!  
Lead us onward far and fast,  
To the wide, the desert waste."

GOETHE.

"Good morning!" said Mrs. Jones to Mrs. Johnson and her son, as they met on the high road to the town of ——. "Rather a doubtful day, I am afraid;" for even gossips find time to discuss the weather.

"It matters little now, so it does not rain on the day of the Hurlestone fête. It is to be a very splendid thing indeed, quite to outdo Mrs. Throgmorton's dance; the same people to manage it, and the cost to be three thousand pounds."

"Oh, no!" said Mrs. Jones, "you are quite wrong, I assure you; but I don't at all wonder at your mistake. There really is no believing any thing one hears! I am quite astonished sometimes at the stories that get about, and wonder how people can repeat them; but I can tell you every thing, for I had it from Miss St. Maur herself yesterday;" and she looked very grand at possessing such exclusive intelligence. "No persons are to be employed but those in the neighbourhood, and the people are to come at ten, and go at eight; and there are to be cricket matches, and races, and dancing, for the poor; and archery, and what not, for the rich; and there are to be one hundred tents pitched, and three thousand pieces of beef, and five thousand plumb-puddings; and the grocer has freighted a ship on purpose to bring home the raisins; and there are one hundred cooks employed, and Miss St. Maur is to be dressed in white, and to dance with the farmers' sons." Here the lady's voice sunk to a myterious whisper; "and it will be announced at the fête that Miss St. Maur is to marry Mr. De Roos, and all the people are to drink their healths."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Mrs. Johnson and her son, in a breath, "are you quite sure?"

"Quite certain, you may depend upon it; but then it is a great secret, and so you must promise not to say one word about it."

"Oh dear, no! we would not mention it on any account. But what will her cousin say?"

"That is why it is to be kept secret. Some say he will shoot himself, and some say he will shoot them; no great loss if he did the first, for he is very disagreeable."

It need scarcely be said very little of this information came direct from our heroine.

"Well, De Roos is a fortunate fellow! I must congratulate him," said Mr. Johnson, wishing to have it believed they were on terms of intimacy. "One can't get a finished girl with ten thousand a-year every day; not but what I think her beauty is rather gone off, and I have had doubts of her temper lately."

"Why, yes; I think she is rather spoilt, and has become proud latterly," agreed Mrs. Jones.

As an aside, we will say that our heroine had been so disgusted with the conduct of both towards Mrs. Mahon, that she had shown her displeasure by shunning them ever since; and what mean mind can receive a slight, deserved or undeserved, and judge without rancour?

"Really she makes such a fuss with that Caroline Mahon, and I can see nothing particular in her."

"Is it really true that she drove over to them the morning after the ball, and paid a large sum of money to prevent their taking Mr. Mahon to gaol, and that she lets them live in her cottage at Belmont, where the Danverses were, rent free, and that she takes them every where in her carriage?"

"Quite true, and a great deal more besides," said Mrs. Jones, "for she gives them clothes, and fruit, and pigs, and sheep, and a great many other things."

Once for all, a lover of truth would do well not to believe more than one half of any report from Mrs. Jones, and not always that.

"A friend in need is a friend indeed!" sneered Mr. Johnson, jealous, as all mean minds are, of favours shown to others.

"Poor things! I am glad they have found such a kind friend. I think Miss St. Maur without an equal," remarked his mother, who, though dearly loving a piece of news, had not one atom of ill-nature.

"Any one could give away money if they had it," replied

Mrs. Jones pettishly, for Mrs. Johnson was of too little consequence to command her respect. "And some people think it injudicious to pet up Caroline Mahon in that way, as I suppose she must go out as governess. She has had her with her all the last week; but then perhaps that was to employ Mr. Elliott, that she might have Mr. De Roos all to herself."

"What, has Mr. De Roos been staying there?"

"You might almost say as much. Scarcely a day has passed, since he has been in the county, but he and Mr. Elliott have been at Hurlestone, or else joined her in her rides and drives; and he decides every thing about the fête. My garret window looks out upon the grounds, and peep when I will, I always see her with Mr. De Roos on one side, and Mr. Elliott on the other, and Miss Mahon round by Mr. Elliott."

"Indeed! Well, I understood from Miss Jones that Lord Alford was there almost as much as Mr. De Roos; and that she had overheard Miss St. Maur ask his Lordship not to encourage his coming, for that she did not wish to appear to follow his advice. And then his Lordship laughed, and said he would do all he could, but that Mr. De Roos had a way of having his will, despite opposition; and so I thought she might have had Miss Mahon and Miss Grey with her, to make his coming less particular."

"Susy must have made a mistake, for I am sure I am right about her going to marry him."

"Whose carriage is that?"

"Miss St. Maur's, I declare; and see, Mr. De Roos and Mr. Elliott have galloped down that cross road and joined her, and now are riding one each side the carriage. What do you think now, Mrs. Johnson? I dare say she is going to — and will take Mrs. Mahon. I am sure I have been wanting to go these three months!"

"I wonder if she will stop?"

She did not stop, and was so much engaged with some remark made by Mr. De Roos, that she did not even perceive them, and only Miss Mahon returned the bow.

"Helen St. Maur seems quite infatuated with De Roos; but we must make allowances," remarked Mrs. Johnson, piqued at the oversight of the bow; but glancing round first, to ascertain no one was near to report the omission of the "Miss."

"She does indeed!" replied Mrs. Jones, "and you see I was right; but remember, not a word!"

"Not a breath!" cried both. A promise kept till a good opportunity for disclosure arrived.

Who would linger in the dusty road with Mrs. Jones, when they could drive to the gay town of —— with Miss St. Maur, Mrs. Mahon, her daughter, and Messieurs De Roos and Elliott? Not we, so behold us in a jeweller's shop, with the whole party assisting our heroine in the choice of a purse-clasp.

"How beautiful! How lovely? What exquisite workmanship!"

"What has excited such enthusiastic encomiums?" enquired Helen.

"This gold chain," said Mrs. Mahon, holding one out to view.

"It is one of the most beautiful I ever saw!" replied Helen.

"There is but one neck worthy of it," remarked De Roos. "You must grant us the pleasure of seeing you wear it."

"How I envy you the power to gratify all your wishes!" said Mrs. Mahon, in a desponding tone.

"Mine is indeed a lot to be thankful for; but with such superior blessings, do not envy me the power of buying a gold chain;" and laying it down, as she spoke, she turned to leave the shop.

Mrs. Mahon looked angry at the rebuke, slight and delicate as it was. "I did not envy you for myself, but for my children, as I had always intended to give Caroline something on her birth-day. But you will not go away without making the purchase? If you wait it may be gone."

"You had better take it at once," said De Roos; "it is too beautiful to remain long on hand."

"But I have no intention to purchase at all. I have already two gold chains, though neither is as elegant as this, and can find no excuse for buying a third."

"Is not its beauty a sufficient excuse? and the good of trade, if you want anything more?"

"Its beauty would be rather a temptation than an excuse, and though all should dress in some proportion to their means, I fear there is more danger of excess, than of the other extreme. I suppose I must say, as rich people do, 'I really can't afford it.'"

Mrs. Mahon, who had too much taste for dress and ornament to withstand temptation herself, and whose former in-

sinuating manner gave place at times, since her misfortune, to a bitter feeling towards those richer than herself, remarked, with an appearance of ill humour, "I am sure, Miss St. Maur, if you cannot afford it, I do not know who can; with your fortune you might have ten gold chains. If I were as I used to be, it should not stay one minute longer in the shop;" then recollecting herself, as she met her daughter's look, she added in her former sweet tone, "you would look so lovely in it, my dear Miss St. Maur. It even makes Caroline a beauty," putting it round her neck. "Come Mr. De Roos, try your persuasions; you are irresistible."

"You will not deprive your friends of the pleasure they anticipate in seeing you wearing this beautiful bauble?" pleaded De Roos.

Unwilling to continue the discussion from a feeling of delicacy towards Mrs. Mahon and her daughter, she ended the matter by saying, as she left the shop, "All this is high treason to our charms, Caroline; we will be admired without gold chains, or not at all." De Roos had too much tact to say more, but Mrs. Mahon muttered loud enough to be heard by some:

"Stingy with such a fortune! Not buy the chain, yet tell her servants to procure a pine at any price!" Then correcting this querulousness, she was again the bland Mrs. Mahon of former days, still manœuvring to bring her daughter and Mr. De Roos together.

"Can I procure you an umbrella? or order your carriage?" inquired Elliott of our heroine, who had just taken shelter in a library from a heavy rain, which had overtaken her as she returned alone from a charitable errand.

"That would be sending you out in the rain."

"Do not think of that. We northerns are not brought up delicately; only tell me how I can serve you. Had not the carriage better come here for you?"

"Perhaps it had, and I will dispatch a note to Mrs. Mahon to that effect; and if, in the mean time, you will execute the errand on which I was speeding, (I would not entrust it to every one) and keep my secret, I shall owe you many thanks."

"Only name your wish, and I will do my devoir like gallant knight."

"Buy that chain, and place it in my possession unknown to any. Here is my purse!"

"Certainly!"

"You are not pleased with the commission. It is raining fast, so never mind."

"It is but a few paces distant, and I do not mind the rain."

"You do not admire the chain then!"

"Yes!— but ———"

"But what?"

"I may offend you."

"If you do not speak frankly, certainly."

"Well then, I admired the chain, but I more admired your self-denial."

"There was little self-denial in the matter; for I prize such things but lightly; and if I were not a little hurt that you could misjudge me thus, I should be more flattered than I might choose to tell, at your thinking me capable of bearing reproof. That is a dangerous flattery indeed, were it only from its rarity."

"Can you so readily and so kindly forgive my error and my presumption? Such a judgment was unpardonable, for I should have guessed your intention; but I feared to find you less perfect than I had deemed."

"Away on your errand. If you play Mentor one moment, you play Syren the next. Even you cannot refrain from flattery."

"Shall I maintain the character you have given me, and say there can be no flattery to you?"

"No, no, no. Leave all those things to others; I hope never to hear any thing from you but truth."

"Believe me, you never shall!" and he went on his errand.

There was not much in this conversation; and yet it is doubtful, if for some minutes after, either thought much of the common affairs of this work-a-day world.

"As the rain still continues, and my barouche holds six, if you will honour Mrs. Mahon and myself with your company till we reach Belmont, we shall be delighted."

The gentlemen accepted the offer with many thanks, and the party proceeded on its way home, with only the delay of an order from Helen to stop at Marston Parsonage. They stopped accordingly, and Helen entered the house for a few minutes, with a parcel in her hand, whose shape and scent proclaimed it to be a pine.

"There!" said Caroline, triumphantly; "I was sure she gave such an order for some kind purpose. If sparing for herself, she is even extravagant for others."

"You cannot think more highly of Miss St. Maur than I do," said De Roos.

"Perhaps not; but I doubt if you understand her."

"My dear, sweet child," interposed Mrs. Mahon; "you are so very amiable, and so warm-hearted, that you allow your affections sometimes to outrun your politeness. I am sure Mr. De Roos has too much penetration not to perceive all the excellence of our dear Miss St. Maur; but you know, my dear Caroline, no one is perfect."

"Not exactly, mamma; but it is not for us to see her faults, to whom her kindness is unwearied and unwearying, and whose most earnest endeavour seems to be to make herself the person obliged."

"It is so delightful to see young people grateful, though their gratitude may be a little exaggerated," remarked Mrs. Mahon, in a sweet tone, though inwardly vexed at the conversation.

"I was charged by Alford with more apologies for his absence, than I choose to recollect or report," said his sister, as she entered the drawing-room at Hurlestone, three days before the intended fête; "whilst my father, with the ponderous politeness of former days, has sent a note of excuse, which, that all things may be done according to strict etiquette, your butler will present in due time and order; and my lady mother sends her love, and she will certainly attend the festival."

"That promise reconciles me to all my fatigue."

"The fatigue of pleasure, I suppose you mean, as I understand your aides-de-camp are with you morning, noon, and night, including the staff officer of Mr. Dalton's appointing."

"If Lady Catharine Alford could blush at her own rudeness and want of feeling, she might have committed such a solecism in fashion, whilst alluding to the latter personage."

"No lectures, child, if you please. If men will be so hideous, they really ought to shut themselves up. I suppose Mr. De Roos takes him about as a foil. By the bye, my dear, when you become Mrs. De Roos you must bargain for his banishment, or I really cannot visit you;" and she fixed her large piercing eyes on Helen's face.

"I wonder Catharine, you are not weary of wasting your impertinence on me, and degrading yourself by such unfeminine remarks."

"Heyday, child! What, affronted because I say your *protégé* is ugly, and you think all that has anything to do



with him must be handsome? Oh! commend me to the over-head-and-ears in love of a country girl! Never blush so, simple one! though I begin to think blushing suits your style of beauty. Oh, here is Mr. De Roos, and I must congratulate him; but the bear is with him. I verily begin to suspect he must be Hans of Iceland, from his attendant. Keep the animal away, Helen, or I shall be tempted to be rude."

"One word, Catharine," and Helen laid her hand on her arm and detained her. "I expect no guest of mine to be treated with insolence whilst in my house; and I also expect, from your character and mine, no comment on idle and false reports."

This rebuke had its effect, and Mr. Elliott's bow was returned, if not with cordiality, at least without absolute rudeness; and the lady forgot her ill humour whilst listening to the agreeable conversation of Mr. De Roos, who, by Helen's management, was also her neighbour at dinner.

"You look ill, Catharine," said Helen, kindly, after the ladies had entered the drawing-room; "is anything the matter?"

"Only a head-ache, the consequence of a faint this morning," she replied *brusquely*, "and your guests are so noisy."

"Why, Mr. De Roos is a great talker."

"I have no power for an encounter of wits at present," answered her friend sharply, "and would be quiet."

"A very courtly dismissal, truly!" and Helen rose with a smile, to leave her.

"Stay," she said, as if suddenly changing her mind. "I hear such marvellous accounts of your fête, I am as much amazed as Mrs. Jones herself. They say there are to be millions of tents, mountains of beef, and continents of pudding; that Mr. De Roos is to play popular, as the future favoured; and that Mr. Percy Dormer is to come down to shake hands with his rival, and be bridesman at the wedding; or to shoot you or him through the heart, as may chance to suit his humour on his coming."

"Heaven forbid!" cried Helen, involuntarily turning pale at the thought, and not at first observing the speaker's wild and searching look.

"Which?" questioned Catharine hastily, still watching her every movement; "that he should shoot you or De Roos? or that he should attend the wedding? or that he should come at all?"

"Each, and all," said Helen, earnestly.

"Then you do not wish him to come at all?"

"Oh, no! no!"

"Is this true? Why not?"

The wild and earnest tone in which this was asked, and the now evident agitation of the questioner, revived a former suspicion, and recalled Helen to composure. Pity for her companion made her answer frankly and instantly to this imperious questioning.

"My cousin and Mr. Dormer are so much inclined to be enemies, on account of some rudeness of the former, that I dread a second meeting."

"Do you fear for Mr. Dormer, or your cousin?"

"I fear for the temper of both, remembering what you told me of the former, and what I know of the latter."

Catharine turned away at these words, or the look which accompanied them, and seemed inclined to sleep.

"Why did you think Mr. Dormer was coming here?" asked Helen, in her turn.

"I thought, being such a prodigious favourite, you would insist on his presence."

"I admire Mr. Dormer, but I have no wish to see more of him at present."

Lady Catharine turned suddenly round, fixed her eyes intently on her, and then, as if satisfied with the scrutiny, again let her head fall on the cushion.

"Then, this report was an invention, to obtain information, or answer some hidden end? Take care, Catharine, you may go too far!"

"No more threats; I have been obedient once to-day, and that is as much as any reasonable person can expect. There, do not tease, there is a good child! I want to sleep. Perhaps Alford or Mrs. Jones said something about it."

"I shall ask Alford," said Helen, convinced there was no hope of gaining further information from her.

Repose, or some other cause, wrought a wonderful change in Lady Catharine's humour, for, in a short time, she became the life of the party, playing her part so well in the strife of words, that all were as delighted as amazed, and wondered how they could have ever thought her disagreeable. Even Helen, though knowing her better than the others, was surprised; but seeing she shrunk from her inquiring look, her guesses as to the causes of the change were probably more

correct than the lady would have wished. In the height of her unusual vivacity, she proposed a lottery of forfeits.

Lady Catharine drew first, and her chance was to act a charade, with a coadjutor. She claimed the assistance of Mr. De Roos, as one accustomed to the game; and the inimitable acting of both gained general admiration. Others drew—a song was sung—a story told, after many denials and excuses. A lecture on poetry followed, from De Roos, which could not fail to delight, so eloquent was his language, so graceful his manner, so varied and beautiful his quotations; and then Elliott drew, and his task was commenced. He was to sing to the guitar, and then receive and answer the compliments of the company.

"Admirable!" said Lady Catharine to De Roos. "It will be worthy the imitation of a Mathews! Fancy his long, scraggy, awkward fingers, rambling among the strings, whilst his gaunt figure, sallow face, and sinister wig, bending over the guitar, will be the very model of an ancient Troubadour—Videl himself, or his burlesque. Coming just after you, too, the contrast will be more delightful!"

This was not said so low, but that it reached the ears of our heroine, as well as the answering laugh of De Roos, and his "You are too severe upon the poor fellow!" whilst a glance at Mr. Elliott's face convinced her he too had heard it.

Indignant at this speech, and determined to save him from ridicule, she said, in a low voice, and with more of blushing and hesitation than on former occasions, "The guitar will not be fit for use," and walked towards a sofa, on which it lay, to fulfil her promise; but Catharine had seen the look and the whisper, divined its purport, and had snatched it up, and began tuning it before Helen could reach it, impeded as she was by the polite offers of De Roos to assist her.

"Now, Mr. Elliott!" exclaimed Lady Catharine, keeping it out of Helen's reach, "here it is! and we are all anticipating the song with great delight. Some tender love ditty, of course. As a favour, if you prefer it, you shall receive the compliments first, and sing after."

"For shame, Catharine!" said Helen, in German, believing no one else understood it. "How can you, for the paltry gratification of a laugh, occasion pain to another? Remember my former threat, and if you have one spark of womanly or generous feeling left, aid me to relieve, rather than distress."

"Amiable protectress!" she replied, in the same language. "I must have my laugh, though you should turn me out of your house the next moment. Never fear! Mr. De Roos will forgive you for ridiculing his dependant." Then, without waiting a reply, she addressed the others in English—"Ladies and Gentlemen, most deeply do I deplore my inability to translate the truly eloquent speech just delivered by my highly gifted friend; sufficient, it failed to convince me of the propriety of breaking through the rules of the game, and dispensing with Mr. Elliott's performance of his task. Having accomplished my own, I claim the accomplishment of all others, without prejudice or partiality; and I am sure Mr. Elliott will duly appreciate my motives, whilst the rest of the company will join with me against Miss St. Maur, and refuse to relinquish the anticipated pleasure."

"Oh, certainly!" cried several, and she looked triumphantly at Helen.

Our heroine was more angry than she could account for, but would not yield without a struggle, though with such force against her, and confused by some feeling she did not understand, she saw there was little hope of success. Anger would have increased the difficulty; earnestness insured defeat; assuming therefore, an easy manner, she protested against the decision.

"I appeal from Lady Catharine to those who have still tasks to accomplish. I claim the suffrages of the ladies, from the dread that they may be condemned to deliver a Latin speech: of the gentlemen, least they should have to perform 'Cavalier soul,' for ten minutes. I own I plead for myself more than others, and propose none should be condemned to perform what they will pledge themselves they have never performed before; or, at least that they may appoint a substitute. I am sure all future performers will vote with me, and declare this resolution passed."

"Yes! yes! yes!" cried many.

"Victory! victory! You are outvoted, Catharine."

"*Parler en ministre* :—do not halloo till you are out of the wood!" replied her friend. "I vote, as an amendment, that such shall be the law hereafter; but that, as Mr Elliott drew his lot before its proposition, he cannot possibly be included in it. Miss St. Maur has doubtless, very strong motives for wishing that Mr. Elliott should not sing; but it is unfair we should be deprived the pleasure of hearing him from an unavowed reason."

"Certainly not! certainly not!" cried the majority; for the lady had reckoned wisely on the votes of the selfish.

Helen coloured high at the insinuation, and was on the point of making an indignant reply, when the object of the discussion, who had not before spoken, stepped forward into the little circle that had crowded round the speakers, and fronted Lady Catharine and De Roos, with an air so proud and dignified that both drew back involuntarily.

"Miss St. Maur's motives for seeking to change the judgment against me, must be understood by every feeling mind; she sought to save a guest from insult and ridicule; that she failed, should be a sorrow, rather than a triumph. Whilst I bow to the decision of the majority, as Lady Catharine imagined, I fully appreciate the motives of all who have taken part in this discussion;" and, with a haughty look at her ladyship, and a contemptuous one at De Roos, he took the guitar, and stepped back from the circle.

As he passed our heroine, to take his seat in a recess, he whispered in German, and, with a look which spoke more than lips could say, "Fear not for me! I shall not disgrace your kindness."

This sudden appearance, and taking part in the discussion, when he had not spoken before; his look and manner, so totally different from his usual quiet reserve; and his retreat from the circle, as abrupt as his entrance, surprised and kept all silent. Glance met glance, as if to ask whence this change: but before a word was spoken, a rich wild symphony was heard, and then rose 'Riego's March,' with its Spanish words, in all its depth and beauty. The heroic victim himself, or his gallant friend who wrote, could not have sung those words with more force or feeling. The critical might have said the voice wanted cultivation; those who had hearts would have felt no such want. It was no amateur performance; no delicate piece of coxcombrv. So completely had he lost his own identity, that it was rather the passionate breathing of a patriot chief, calling on his countrymen to follow to victory or death, than the song of an English gentleman in a lady's drawing-room.

Before any had recovered their surprise, or could say one word, in praise, the singer was again fronting Lady Catharine, and with the same calm, dignified mein as before, announced his readiness to receive and answer her compliments.

There was in his high bearing and passionate style of singing, so much in accordance with the better parts of her own

character, that all desire to ridicule or distress was instantly lost in approbation, as imperiously expressed as had been her former determination.

"No, Mr. Elliott! you have performed the first part of your task so much to the delight of all, that our compliments must be but an echo of each other. We acquit you, therefore, of the second part, and claim another song as a reward for our clemency."

A slight look of surprise, passing away almost instantly, was the only change visible on Mr. Elliott's features, as turning to the rest of the party he said,—

"Am I to understand that all acquit me?"

"Yes, yes, all!"

"Then am I quite free! for you can claim nothing on the plea of clemency;" and with a cold bow to the lady he turned away, exchanging a look with our heroine as he passed, which needed no words to express its meaning.

Lady Catharine bit her lip, at this open but gentlemanly rebuke of her haughtiness and rejection of her condescending notice, but recovered herself instantly.

"The man is wise! Had he chosen a less judicious moment for his display, or were he to repeat it, the effect might be lessened."

Lady Catharine Alford does me too much honour, I can lay no claim to the wisdom for which she gives me praise, since her commands alone made me a performer."

"The lady looked still more surprised at his presumption in answering her; and the cold but polite manner in which the answer was given; and then turning to De Roos bade him proceed with the game.

"What excuse can you make for having so artfully concealed your talent?" asked Helen, unheard by others.

"Perhaps I prefer the bear to the monkey?"

"That might furnish some excuse at another time, and to another person;" and she looked half reproachfully, "but this evening, when one word would have spared—"

"Do not condemn me," he said, interrupting her; "all passed so quickly I scarcely understood the matter before I spoke; and but indulged one little moment in gratitude. Believe me, I would not have pained your delicacy had I possessed a quicker wit, though could I have avoided the exhibition I should have preferred it. I have not touched the guitar for months, and owe my success more to the deep impression made on me by the song, when sung by an exiled patriot,

than to any skill of my own. A talent for the guitar is rather a dangerous possession for one unused to the voice of flattery; and I agree with her ladyship, that my scraggy fingers, and gaunt figure, are not exactly calculated for the instrument; moreover, with the pride natural to those reared in solitude, I have, as you know, a more than due horror of making myself ridiculous."

"However eloquent your defence, I must not quite acquit you; or you may play the discourteous a second time, and refuse to let me hear that song again."

"Discourteous to you! believe it not! Had you but looked a wish, it should have been complied with."

"And you would have spared Catharine the rebuke, and appeared to obey her summons."

"Judge me not so ill as to doubt it. I might not choose to play the puppet to gratify her caprice. But for you: command, and I'll obey you."

"Most gallantly promised, and I shall prove your sincerity by claiming that song the first convenient opportunity, and insisting on your telling me the tale of the Spanish Patriot."

"I am too much flattered to attempt excuse, which exemplifies the danger of the talent, and if I can but interest you for the poor exile I shall thank Lady Catharine for forcing me to sing."

"I am interested in all exiles, for every evil must be light compared to that. Is he in distress?"

"He toils day and night to procure comforts for a dying brother."

"Write his address, and what will best serve him, and leave it on that table."

"How shall I thank you?"

"By always claiming boldly for the unfortunate; and not thinking the favour shown to you but them," she added playfully, as she turned away from his gaze.

Meantime the game had gone on. A proverb had been drawn, and two had left the room to arrange a plan for its acting.

"What a dreadful accident of Mr. Dormer's," said Mr. Mahon across the room to our heroine.

"What was the name of the surgeon of whom you spoke so highly the other day? I would write to Sir James Watson, to beg him to recommend him; but he was such a favourite of yours, I dare say you have done it long since;" for

Mr. Mahon believed every one else as fond of recommending and interfering as himself.

"What accident do you mean?" inquired Helen eagerly, turning pale as she spoke, and forgetting in her interest for him, how her eagerness might be construed by others.

"Is it possible you have not heard then? I understand he has broken a leg and an arm, and put out his shoulder, besides some severe bruises, and is not expected to survive."

"How and when did this happen?"

"I'll tell you all about it;" and Mr. Mahon began a long rigmarole about recommending horses, and not recommending horses; what should have been done, and what should not have been done; with various other matters, that made the story double the requisite length.

His tale, robbed of all meretricious ornament, was, that Mr. Dormer, with his wonted pertinacity, had persisted in conquering an obstinate horse, and as his manner of so doing had not been very gentle, a fall had been the consequence, accompanied by the injuries before stated.

Helen listened in eager impatience; her pale cheek and sympathising look furnishing matter of comment to all who were not engaged in attending to Mr. Mahon. Before the roundabout tale was quite concluded something was thrown down close to Helen, and as she turned to pick it up, Mr. Elliott stooped at the same time, and whispered in German,—

"Lady Catharine is fainting, and her pride and womanly delicacy will ill brook an open exposure; whilst you lead her from the room I will make a confusion."

A look of thanks showed she understood him, and before she could reach Catharine, a backgammon-board was thrown down, and the men rolling about in every direction.

"I am certainly very awkward, or very unfortunate," said Elliott.

"So I think!" remarked De Roos sarcastically, who had hoped to learn something from a longer perusal of our heroine's countenance.

"See, you have frightened Lady Catharine into leaving the room."

"My head aches—I would be alone—and without light," murmured Catharine with great difficulty, as soon as they had placed her on a sofa in an adjoining room.

Helen dismissed every one else, placed the light on a distant table, but still lingered herself.

There was a fearful struggle between mind and body.



Catharine was too proud, and too much accustomed to control feelings and looks, to yield even at such a moment as this without a violent effort for victory; but even the strongest and the proudest must fail at times. She would have insisted on being alone, but the effort was too much; the lip became more livid, the eyes more glassy, and after a slightly convulsive movement she lay perfectly still.

Helen sprung towards the couch, sunk on her knees beside it, and whilst she bathed her temples with eau de Cologne strove to sooth and quiet her distress.

"Do not believe the tale. Mr. Mahon is apt to exaggerate; and Alford would certainly have heard, had this been true."

Catharine spoke not; but now, rather recovered, turned away from her companion's gaze, and with an impatient movement of the hand waved her from her.

"I will not quit you, dear Catharine, ill as you are. If you would but let your tears flow you would feel relieved; and only tell me where to find Alford, and I will send a servant instantly to inquire."

"Is it thus you triumph over me?" exclaimed Catharine, starting from the couch. "You will send and inquire! you would tell me he loves you, and that you have no cause for shame! Shame! And why should I feel shame? Who says I love him? Would Lady Catharine Alford give her love unasked? I hate him, and you know I do." Then changing her haughty tone to one of wild anguish, she continued, wringing her hands:—"Hate! hate Dormer! No, no, no. But he will die thinking I do. If he but guessed my love, and we could die together—" and shuddering and exhausted she fell back on the couch.

"Dear, dear Catharine, do not talk thus!" said the weeping Helen, throwing her arms around her. "He will not die; believe it not."

"Then your triumph will be but the more complete: you will see me scorned, and you will offer pity. But beware! I am not yet fallen so low! They shall see no tear; they shall hear no word; and who will believe your tale? The whole world knows I detest him; and how know you the contrary?"

"This is unkind, Catharine. Why think I should triumph?"

"Because you cannot love me; and I would have triumphed over you. Now do your worst," she added, in a wild and desperate tone; "go and proclaim my shame; but remember, death will follow!"

Helen was shocked. Catharine was suffering from the agony of wounded pride, more even than from the fear of his death. Her love was passionate, but her pride more passionate still. Yet was this no moment for reproof, however gentle; the wildness of her looks, and the threatening of her words called for soothing.

"Do not think of such fearful things, dear Catharine. If I have loved you hitherto for your dear mother's sake, hereafter let me love you for your own. I am not your rival; and your sufferings may well excuse the past. Fear not to weep, you shall never find a truer friend."

Catharine was softened, but not quite subdued.

"Dormer loves you?" she questioned, with her wild eyes glaring on her.

"I love not him."

"Will you bind yourself never to wed with him?"

"I will; for you will be secret."

"You could reject his love? Then you must love another."

"No."

"No! Yet receive his love with coldness! But you cannot love; you are too cold, too prudent. Or you had some reason?"

"I trembled at his passions, and despised not your warnings."

"Warnings and omens! I despise them all. I said you were too cold, too prudent. Yet you sigh; is it for him?"

"Rather for you."

"Then spare yourself the trouble. My fate is linked with his for good or ill. For ill, indeed! even now he may be dying."

A low knock was heard at the door.

"I will see noone!" exclaimed Catharine, hiding her face in the sofa.

"It is no one who would enter needlessly," answered Helen.

She left the room for a few minutes, and when she returned a smile and a blush seemed contending for mastery.

"Fear not, dear Catharine; Mr. Dormer suffers from nothing more than a slight bruise on his arm."

"Thank Heaven!" and Catharine's head rested on Helen's neck, as she knelt beside her, and the tears which had been restrained before now flowed freely.

"How know you this?" she questioned after a time.

"Mr. Throgmorton, who had left the room to arrange his

proverb, on his return showed a letter from a friend, written the day after the accident, giving the whole account, and franked by Mr. Dormer himself."

The tears were soon checked, and Lady Catharine looked almost herself again.

"Now you are better, shall I order your carriage, or what will you do? For I should return to the drawing-room to hush suspicion."

"I will accompany you, that will best silence the talking of evil tongues; and now I think of it, was there not a noise to which I could attribute my fainting? What was it?"

"Mr. Elliott threw down the backgammon board," said Helen coldly and reprovingly.

"The very thing," replied Catharine, not choosing to remark her manner; "the annoying him will prove I am quite myself again."

"Indeed it will, more than your friends could wish. Will suffering never teach you forbearance?"

"No moralizing; I must have my way to-night," shunning her look; "besides, Mr Elliott refused my offer of conciliation, and, I dare say, bears malice, as the old nurses say, so deserves punishment; and for once you must yield him to my vengeance. You see he can defend himself. Let me pass, for I am impatient to begin the play; and never look so indignant, child! or we must take to quarrelling again. You know, in the time of Good Queen Bess, the most delicate ladies found great delight in a bear bait."

"You pass not hence, Catharine, till you have heard that, which but for your ungenerous determination should have been kept secret," said Helen firmly, resisting her effort to pass.

"Have done with chiding, then, and out with the mighty secret. Has this northern light an inclination to illumine my hemisphere? or does he think his guitar would sound gallantly amid the woods of Hurlestone? for I conclude it is concerning him you would speak. If the former, say I dread contact with a meteor: if the latter, you shall have my best offices to persuade the world that it is no preposterous match, but on the contrary, a well-assorted union."

"I have too high an opinion of his judgment to suspect the former, and too low an opinion of my own worth to imagine the latter."

" 'Oh, many a shaft at random sent,  
Finds mark the archer little meant.' "

"Catharine, this is folly."

"*Tout au contraire!* your blushes speak volumes. Shall the wedding be a pink one, or a blue one, or a white one, and when shall I send to Paris for the orange blossom? You have not decided yet. Well then, we will talk about it some other time, for I comprehend it fully, and will get Mr. De Roos to assist me in arranging it. What will Alford and your cousin say? Perhaps they might forbid the banns. To prevent this, what think you of a runaway match, with a demure, chaperon, a lady's maid, and footman, to propitiate the dowagers?" and she tried to pass, whilst distracting attention by her fooling. Her plan did not succeed. Helen spoke not, but she laid her hand on her arm, and looking gravely and steadily in her face. It was impossible to mistake the regret and reproach conveyed by that look; even the haughty Lady Catharine Alford felt its power, and attempted a defence.

"Would you have me proclaim my shame, and ask for pity and contempt? Would you have me bare my feelings to the curious and impertinent, and become a mock to the flippant and the vile? Would you have me break down the barrier that stems the tide? And who would control the torrent if I should?"

"I would have nothing shown that woman should conceal. But why feign this levity to me? Would you have me believe the past a fancy or mere delusion, and that you neither dread nor suffer?"

Catharine would fain have persuaded her of this if she could; but the effort was beyond even her. She shuddered as she remembered her dread for Dormer, and for a moment her eyes sought the ground: then rallying, she said:

"To conceal—but not to feign. On my word, I am too little of a metaphysician to delight in such delicate distinctions; so suppose we defer the discussion, since a speedy return to the drawing-room would be an act of wisdom in both. I will consider of your reproofs, for I read your looks, and after I have worried Mr. Elliott to protect myself, try to be good."

"Is this the commencement of amendment? Beware!"

Catharine was daunted by her companion's look and tone; but, too angry to show it, and too proud to bend, she answered recklessly,

"Beware of what? I will hold parley no longer! Out with it, in the name of all that is sublime! Be it of love or hatred! northern bear, or southern sheik!"

"On your own head then, rest the pain. It was Mr. Elliott who relieved your anxiety!"

This one sentence was sufficient. Lady Catharine comprehended all it would convey; she looked wildly round, suppressed a faint shriek, and then, sinking into a seat, covered her face with her hands.

"Catharine," said Helen, throwing her arms round her, and forgetting all her indignation, "Forgive me, I would have spared you, but you would not let me."

"Away!" replied Catharine in a fierce tone. "You have betrayed me, and to one who will seek revenge." Then recovering herself with a violent effort, she rose, made a motion for Helen to pass from before her, and seeing her motion was not obeyed, and that Helen was about to speak, she fixed on her a contemptuous look, as she said in a haughty tone: Further speech between us, Miss St. Maur, would be useless. "You have done your worst, or will do it, for I am not one to sue. Lady Marston and Lord Alford will render thanks for your kindness to their child and sister; mine are worthless, or they should be yours. But I detain you from amusing your company with the detail. Order my carriage and you shall have the sequel of the tale to-morrow: a right comic ending," and she smiled fearfully, as with a stately step she approached the bell.

The forced calm of her tone, and her studied words, formed a strong contrast with the wild glare of her eye, and the burning spot upon her cheek. Helen had been prepared for violence, but not for this; shocked and alarmed, she sprang forward to stay her from touching the bell, and would have taken her hand, but Catharine repulsed her rudely, and heeded not her words.

The bell rang violently.

If she allowed her to depart thus, who could tell the consequences. Pride and passion, unchecked by religion, are workers of deadly deeds. The very emergency of the case supplied calmness and courage.

The servant entered the room, and before Catharine could give an order, had left it again, with a message from his mistress to her maid, concerning some eau de Cologne, as Lady Catharine was faint: a message delivered with such outward calmness and promptitude, that nothing but a slight agitation, quite allowable when a fainting fit is in contemplation, was discernible.

"Allow me to congratulate you on your improvement in

feigning or concealing, as you would doubtless term it," said her Ladyship angrily, and sarcastically; "but you can scarcely hope to cope with me, and I will not be detained." Her hand was again extended towards the bell, but Helen stepped between.

"For your mother's sake, for your own sake, you shall not leave me thus! I did not betray, and you have nothing to fear from Mr. Elliott, since to his kindness you owe the confusion that covered and accounted for your faintness;" and, without waiting for a reply, she related all that had occurred, mingling with the relation so many expressions of affection, and such strong pledges for the honour and delicacy of Mr. Elliott, with such encomiums on his generosity, penetration, and address, that before its conclusion Catharine's arm was around her neck, and when she was silent, pleadings for forgiveness and words of contrition fell from Catharine's lips, almost for the first time of her life.

It would be waste of time to say with what warmth that embrace was received and returned, or how readily the forgiveness was accorded. Both felt this was no time to indulge in their feelings, as a quick return to the drawing-room, with as much calmness as they could assume, was desirable. But Lady Catharine's pride, though quieted was not conquered: that must be a work of time; so after the first generous feelings had a little subsided, each moment placed her degradation before her in stronger colours. She cherished an unrequited love, and worse to one of her feelings, she had betrayed this weakness to the two last people in the world to whom she would have willingly revealed it. The one, though the playmate of her childhood, a person whom, despite her many virtues, she had at times almost hated as a rival; the other a stranger, who had received nothing at her hands but bitter sarcasm, and ungenerous contumely. They might forgive: but would they not triumph?

What right had she to expect generosity? Her own heart condemned her—she looked steadily at Helen, and met with nothing in that look but what tended to re-assure her. She felt she might trust her—but Mr. Elliott! could she—ought she to trust him? She would not bend, and yet he had a right to expect it. She must brave him then, and trust to her own powers: but not to-night—no, she could not meet him to-night! How should she brook the shame of the meeting? yet better perhaps to brave him at once. She tried to resolve, but the effort was beyond her, and that proud heart again writhed

with shame and anger. "Helen," she said abruptly, "I am too ill to join the party; let me go now, and you must make excuses for me as you can, if Mr. Elliott have not, ere this, put excuse beyond my power."

"That has he not!" replied Helen warmly. "You shall go home if you wish it, but not under your present impressions," for the struggle had not escaped her penetration. "That there is much to pain your delicacy in Mr. Elliott's knowledge I do not deny; but nothing, believe me, to awaken fear of further disclosure, for he is incapable of such baseness. Why should he draw attention upon himself to screen you, if he were capable of revenge? One hint, however slight—even a look—and his triumph had been complete, without the odium of betrayal. If I could but describe his manner, his sympathy, the delicacy with which he turned all suspicion aside, you could doubt no longer. Besides, he knows not you are aware of his knowledge, as, but for yourself I should not have disclosed it; and surely, Catharine, you may depend on me? To return and listen with calmness to the conversation, which, to avoid suspicion, I must originate, is a measure too bold for me to propose to any but yourself, yet will it free you from much anxiety."

Catharine felt the truth of this, but it was a great effort, and she hesitated.

"And he will require neither explanation, apology, or thanks, by word or look, or sign?"

"Neither of all these; only a little common politeness. I must bargain for that," replied Helen, smiling.

"I will not call you an angel, for that is what the gentlemen call us, when they mean to deceive; but I will say you are the dearest and kindest of human beings, and you shall see how civil I can be. One minute to recover, and not a person shall suspect."

"I hope it may be so," thought Helen; "but Mr. De Roos is not easily deceived

## CHAPTER V.

Those clasped hands—that look—that thrilling tone—  
 Oh! who of old e'er braced his armour on  
 For holier, higher deed—for hope more bright—  
 To succour age, and revel in the light  
 Of a young spirit's loving, grateful mood—  
 Sole monarch of her heart's rich solitude!  
 That shriek—that touch—those words that bid him stay—  
 But urge and light him on his onward way.  
 Fond heart, be still! the sacrifice must be!  
 And that high soul prove worthy even thee;  
 Although the world's loud praise—Fame's brightest guile—  
 Are but as tinsel to thy glowing smile.

TITANIA.

LADY CAROLINE leant on Helen's arm as she entered the drawing-room, and against her will there was a slight, a very slight trembling, as she passed Mr. Elliott; but only Helen was aware of it.

"Room, lordlings, room!" said our heroine gayly, waving aside those who would have crowded round with inquiries.

"I have persuaded Catharine to return, notwithstanding a violent head-ache; but I am too judicious a physician to allow her to be troubled with questions; and, for the general satisfaction, I can assert that a sufficient quantity of sal volatile, eau de Cologne, &c. &c. has been administered; and as she has fainted before this day, I shall not allow an inordinate share of blame to be attached to the heat of my room or the perfume of my pet tuberose. Here, dear Catharine, you shall recline on this sofa, like a sultana, whilst we, your faithful subjects, endeavour to amuse you;" and she arranged the cushions so as to conceal her friend's face. "One more cushion."

Mr. Elliott's ready hand supplied it, at the same time that he delicately avoided meeting the look of the sufferer.

"Thank you, Mr. Elliott," said Catharine, in a low voice, touched by his conduct.

"What are you at, Mr. de Roos?" exclaimed Helen; "placing the lamp so as to glare on Catharine's face? Who ever



heard of such a thing for a head-ache ? Do pray remove it."

"Pardon me ! I deemed it unworthy my gallantry to permit such beauty to linger in the shade ; and I thought you and your friend ever sought the light."

"Of course, in general ; but with a head-ache even light may be hateful. And now, how stands the game ? for Catharine insisted on being no interruption, and hopes her message on the subject was attended to."

"Partly ; but it was carried on with no spirit during your absence. I believe the task of singing a song which none of the company have ever heard before, rests with Miss Mahon."

"A most barbarous imposition it is too ; for they are all so malicious as to put a *veto* on every song I propose."

"You will find some foreign ones in that portefeuille, never heard in England, and you will look over and assist her in the choice, Mr. De Roos."

This half request, half command, could not be disputed, and one pair of penetrating eyes was removed from her friend ; for the portefeuille was at the opposite end of the room.

"What a dreadful account you were giving of Mr. Dormer !" said Helen, addressing Mr. Mahon, as he leant against the couch, and screened Catharine from observation. "I am inclined to hope it is not correct ; for, I am sure, Lord Alford would in that case have gone to him immediately, and he has not even heard of it."

"I believe the report was very much exaggerated, but Throgmorton has set me right."

Mr. Throgmorton was appealed to, questions were put and answered, the gentleman's character rather discussed, and in fitting time Helen turned the conversation.

Nothing new was learned, and the free and open, yet warm and friendly manner, in which she spoke of Mr. Dormer, was calculated to allay all suspicion, even in the minds of judicious observers. She neither hurried nor spun out the conversation ; neither needlessly spoke of her personal knowledge of him, nor shrunk from an allusion to it ; her praise was warm and decided, but such as young ladies bestow on friends, not on lovers.

Even Catharine was satisfied with her words and manner, and felt towards her as she had never felt before.

One or two still thought he might be lord of Hurlestone, but then they were people who certainly had no genius for

developing a mystery. It is strange that young ladies cannot praise young gentlemen as they deserve, but that half the world will nod, try to look wise, and fancy there is something in it. Yet is it fortunate for young ladies, that half the world is so unwise.

"Now, Caroline, for the song," said Helen, "for I am sure the choice will do credit to you and Mr. De Roos."

"Not to Mr. De Roos, for he had so little taste for the task assigned him that he deserted me almost immediately."

"Indeed! I should have thought Mr. De Roos incapable of such a want of gallantry."

"Has Miss Mahon been telling tales of me?" he inquired with, as Helen thought, a little confusion in his manner.

"That has she; and I have been amazed to hear of your breach of politeness."

"Rather of my want of knowledge, and my old fault, a dread of ridicule. I know so little of music, that I feared to commit myself by advice, and retreated in prudence."

"This really alters much the case, and yet never was fear of ridicule more fearlessly expressed; and I thought you had fully understood that an imposing manner bears more weight than wiser matter. But hush!" placing her taper finger on her lips, as he would have answered.

By the time the song and its accompanying compliments had ceased, some of the elders found out it was late, and the roads dangerous; so more than one carriage was ordered.

"It is quite beautiful to hear Miss St. Maur praise her friends," remarked Mr. De Roos to Lady Catharine, taking advantage of the confusion occasioned by the departures. "Is it true that our fair hostess is to be the future Mrs. Dormer? The whole country rings with it!"

The question was abrupt, perhaps purposely so, to elicit the truth; but it should have been more careless, to prevent all suspicion of a greater than common interest in the questioner, and his eyes sought the lady's face with a painfully penetrating look.

Fortunately for her, that face was still veiled from the light, and the gentleman's mind was strongly impressed with a notion wide of the truth, or, adept as she was, thrown off her guard by the abrupt question, her agitation might have betrayed her. A gallant knight was near to step forward to her rescue unasked, and it might be, unthanked.

"I beg your pardon," said Elliott, advancing between the lady and her interrogator; "but will you allow me to

look behind this cushion for Miss Wortley's scarf. There is a hue and cry for it."

The lady not only submitted to the inconvenience with a politeness quite unusual, but even joined in the search.

"What a troublesome fellow you are!" exclaimed Mr. De Roos, endeavouring to hide his vexation under the veil of badinage. "This is the second time you have made a commotion. I only hope Miss St. Maur will not put me under and for your awkwardness."

"Do not be alarmed," said that young lady, returned from the task of congédizing. "You will never be confounded in my judgment with Mr. Elliott."

The words were said in a simple tone, but they admitted of two meanings. The gentleman took the one most flattering to himself.

"A thousand thanks! I have sins enough of my own, without doing penance for those of others. Yet, as having introduced him, I am in honour bound to repair some of his mischief. Are you aware of the damage done to your backgammon men? But I doubt if you are. I remember you were very much interested in something at the moment—Mr. Mahon's sad tale about Mr. Dormer, I think. No wonder you should have been affected, for Dormer is a noble creature. I have just been remarking how delightful it is to hear you praise the absent: it might almost reconcile one to banishment."

"There would exist two difficulties in that case," replied Helen, annoyed at his pertinacity. "You must be certain of receiving the praise; and then be certain of hearing it repeated."

'Just what you hear you have, but what's unknown,  
The same, my lord, if Tully's or your own.'

"The first difficulty I acknowledge, and my presumption in supposing I could overcome it; the second is less than nothing. Can you suppose for a moment, Dormer will not be gratified by a repetition of your words? Who could refrain from being the messenger of such happiness?"

This was an idea she had never entertained, and under present circumstances was by no means a pleasant one to entertain; besides, she was but little pleased at the scrutiny of her penetrating observer, as she felt her colour heighten under his searching look. Her first impulse was to clear herself from suspicion, but the next instant the fear of betray-

ing Catherine deterred her. At present, her friend's secret was safe from his almost superhuman penetration, and she determined to do her best to keep it so.

"I should have thought, from your knowledge of the world, you would not have expected pleasant things to travel with the same rapidity, or certainty, as unpleasant ones; the more so as I doubt your undertaking the office of reporter," and she looked up at him with a look almost as penetrating as his own, and a half suppressed smile at his being deceived.

That smile! What could it mean? It lingered on his mind for days, baffling his penetration; but he did not discontinue the conversation.

"I doubt, as you intimate, if I shall be generous enough to convey such happiness to another. That I could but learn the art of winning such for myself! Will you deign to instruct me, Lady Catharine?"

"By deserving it, I suppose," replied her ladyship sarcastically, glad of an opportunity of venting her ill humour at his questioning. Surprised at her answer, for they had hitherto been great allies, he turned upon her a look that would have read the inmost thoughts of any one second to Talleyrand, but she met his gaze with one that betrayed nothing but a want of temper. He thought of her accredited dislike to Dormer; she had meant the sarcasm for the absent, not the present, and the suspicion, if it had amounted to such, vanished. A word from Helen, who had trembled for her friend, confirmed him in his error.

"No impeachment of my justice, if you please, or the merits of my friends."

"Then I may hope, by good conduct, to win the like."

"Hope nothing! I claim a woman's privilege—caprice!" and she turned to bid adieu to some departing guests.

"Heaven bless you, dear Helen!" said Catharine to her friend, as they were standing a little apart, whilst the gentlemen were shawling some other ladies. "No wonder my mother and Alford love you; but you must love me too, for their sakes."

"Not so! for your own hereafter."

"Thank you! thank you! To-morrow I would be alone, after that I will be myself again."

"Your present self, dear Catharine?"

"Right, Helen; but no sudden changes are lasting. Nevertheless we will try;" and she kissed her cheek.

De Roos brought a shawl, Elliott a tippet, for he still sought to shield her from questions. She accepted the services of both, and her good night to Elliott was to De Roos's practised ear, more cordial than that to himself.

All the guests were gone, save the Mahons and one or two others who were staying in the house, and the gentlemen from Colville Lodge. These last seemed loath to depart, but lingered still conversing on the coming fête. A doubt arose as to the state of the weather, and the prospect for the morrow, which, as some of the tents were not pitched, was rather material. One said it looked fair in the east; and one said it looked foul in the west; one saw sunshine in the north, and one rain in the south; but all agreed it was cold, and unlike a summer's evening.

"Come with me!" said Helen, laughing at the dispute, "and then all shall stake their credit on a prediction."

She led the way, and after ascending the grand staircase, and traversing some passages, they mounted a narrow winding stair, and passing through a trapdoor, stood on a platform on the leads of the house. No sooner had Helen looked around, after warning her friends of the difficulties of the passage, than a sudden exclamation of terror burst from her lips.

"A fire! At Mansel's cottage too! and his poor wife ill in bed! Let me pass, that I may send instant assistance," making her way as she spoke, through the group, who, crowded on the small platform, rendered a retreat difficult.

The foremost stepped back in terror, those more behind in surprise, for they had ascended too lately to have discovered the cause of her haste; but, without waiting to explain, she passed them all, and in an instant more her light step was heard descending the stairs with rather perilous speed. One eye had seen as she had seen; one ear had caught, and instantly understood her words; one heart felt the kindly purpose on which she was speeding: and one step followed her so speedily, as to reach her ere she had descended the first flight. That eye, that ear, that heart, that step, was Elliott's.

"Let me entreat you, Miss St. Maur, to allow me to pass, and be your messenger: you shall have no cause to complain of delay. I tremble at the speed with which you descend these dark and winding stairs."

"No! no! There is less danger in it to me, than there would be to you; it was a favourite retreat as a child, and I know every turn."

There was neither time nor breath for parley. A few mo-

ments brought them both in safety to the level passage, and in a few more they were standing in the hall. A servant passed. "Watson! there is a fire at Mansel's cottage! Let some one ring the alarm bell, and all the men hasten thither with ladders and buckets," exclaimed the panting Helen, leaning for a moment against the wall. After a brief space, to recover breath, she moved towards the door.

"Do not you encounter the night air, and thus thinly clad," interposed her companion: "rely on me. All that man can do, shall be done."

"I know I could rely on you: but my presence will console and animate."

Her manner was too decided to admit of dispute, and it may be her resolve was too much in accordance with his own character to be combatted.

"Stay but one moment then!"

He passed from her side, and before she could feel impatient, a large cloak was folded round her, a bonnet placed on head, and clogs arranged for her feet, as his frequent visits had shown him where these things hung in the passage; and all this with the speed of thought. But no cloak, no hat for himself—he thought only for her.

A sudden turn of the path, and an opening among the trees, gave to their view the fire, which was each moment increasing in fury. First rose a thick volume of smoke, broken as it were into clouds of various shape and shade; dense and narrow at the bottom, but expanding as it rose, and spreading wide its misty wreaths, till at length they floated over the clear gray sky like the snow flakes of a giant world. Then there was a change in the shape and colour of the smoke; forked darts of vivid flame ever and anon burst through the misty column—there seemed a mighty struggle which should gain the mastery: then the smoke partly passed away, and the vapoury pillar gave place to a bright pyramid of dazzling fire—the blaze of Truth dispelling the mist of Error. They hurried on, and the next turning in the path hid it from their view.

Helen's failing strength and deep breathing soon warned her companion, on whose arm she leant, that some delay was absolutely requisite.

"You must pause a little; you are not equal to such exertion."

"But there may be none to aid them!"

"Your feeble strength could not check the fire; but if you

will promise to linger here awhile, and then proceed more slowly, I will hasten on."

Feeling the truth and kindness of his words, she assented.

He placed her in a bower, drew the cloak more closely round her, took her directions as to the path, and dashing through the trees, was out of sight in a moment."

"How grand! How shocking! What is the matter? Where is Miss St. Maur?" were some of the questions and exclamations uttered by those on the platform.

"Bless me!" said Mr. Mahon, "I wonder if there is any one to assist. Let me get down, that I may send some one directly to my friend Delville for his safety ladders."

His friend lived ten miles distant. Poor people! if their sole dependence should be on Mr. Delville's safety ladders!

"Where is Miss St. Maur?" inquired Mr. De Roos.

"Gone to order assistance, you may be sure," said Miss Mahon.

"Let me pass!" and he too was soon wending his way to the fire.

With all her desire of speed, Helen had not reached the burning cottage when De Roos overtook her.

"Pray take my arm! I am quite grieved you should expose yourself to the night air. I find it chill, even through my cloak. Let me persuade you to return."

She took the proffered arm, for she was really weary; but intimidated by movements rather than words her determination to proceed.

"Do not distress yourself so much," he continued, as he felt she was obliged to lean on him for support. "Rely upon it no one will be hurt; the poor always get out of scrapes."

There was a heartlessness in this that displeased her, and she made no answer, but hurried on. As she came near, and in full sight of the cottage, a messenger met her, despatched by Elliot's consideration, to say all the inhabitants of the cottage were safe.

"Thank Heaven!" and the tears stood in her dark eyes.

She questioned the speaker.

It was all owing to Elliott's bravery and presence of mind. He had ordered, he had done every thing. Whilst the distracted father was wringing his hands, he had rushed into the cottage and saved his wife and children. No wonder the man was loud and eloquent in his praise!

She was silent for a moment, and then asked where the family were.

"The gentleman thought of every thing, ma'am. He had Kitty Mansel wrapt in blankets and taken to the nearest cottage, and he sent the children to another; but they have not all been out of the house two minutes—and see, the roof is ready to fall in."

It was as the man said. The blazing rafters were shooting up their flames high and bright into the calm air, contrasting with the pure sky above, gleaming on the upturned faces of the crowd, and shedding a wild strange light over the rich woods around. It was an awful, but a beautiful sight; and Helen for the moment was so lost in admiration, that she saw not who stood by her side.

It was but for a moment—the next her hand was extended.

"Words cannot thank you, Mr. Elliott; I have heard all!"

The extended hand was pressed, but no word was spoken.

Besides the cottage itself, which was now almost in ruins, there was another building, consisting of a room above and below, with a loft over, connected with the cottage only by a narrow wooden gallery. This gallery, forming the only entrance to the upper room, had caught fire and fallen some time before, and the smoke was issuing from one or two places in the roof, caused by the fall of some burning fragments; otherwise, this detached building had suffered little. Assured that it contained nothing of value, and that no living being was there, Elliot had taken no care for its preservation on account of the scarcity of water; but, whilst pointing out the harmonies and contrasts of the scene to Helen, with all the enthusiasm of a devoted admirer of nature, a wild and thrilling shriek was heard—all eyes were turned in the same direction: at a small window, scarcely larger than a loophole, appeared a female face.

"Nurse Smith!" screamed Helen, "save her! save her!"

Even whilst she spoke, the smoke from the roof gave place to flame, and a canopy of fire hung over the screaming and terrified woman. Mr. Elliott darted away at Helen's wild appeal, to seek an entrance from below, for the window was too small to admit a hope.

"Will no one save her?" screamed Helen in agony, as the wretched woman recognized and called on her for safety; and she would have herself rushed towards the burning building, but De Roos detained her.

"Twenty pounds to any one will save her," cried he.

"Life is as dear to us as to you, sir," said several voices.

"Will no one save her for my sake?" said Helen wildly,



as the screams become more dreadful. "I offer not money; but if any desire it, they shall claim it as they will. Will no one save her?"

"I will, Miss Helen!" It was the voice of James Watts; but his mother clung around him.

"Oh, Miss Helen! bid him bide here! Rob not the widow, of her child!

"Is it certain death then?"

"Certain!" cried several.

"I will venture! You will take care of my mother, Miss Helen, if I die. Keep her back, some one:" but she clung the more wildly to him.

"Miss Helen, bid him bide. Why should one life be lost for another, or both—the young for the old?"

Helen paused in silent agony. What right had she to rob the widow of her only stay? She felt the force of the appeal, and waved him back.

"Let me lead you away!" said De Roos.

"No! no! something may yet be done. Can no means be found?" and she looked round in agony.

Her eye rested on Elliott, who had just returned from his brief and fruitless search for an entrance from below.

"Something shall be done!" he said, in answer to her silent appeal. "Who knows the entrance to that room?"

"It is there! sir," pointing to a door some way up the building, half concealed by a tea plant growing in wild luxuriance. "Bring a ladder!" One had just arrived; he snatched it from the hands of the person who bore it.

"It is madness!" cried many, "the roof is just going to fall in, and the old woman must be smothered by this time."

Her screams were indeed hushed, and her face was seen no more.

"Stay! stay!" said Helen, springing forward, and placing her hand on his arm, as he passed near her to plant the ladder against the wall, too perilous an act for oneless daring. "You must not risk your life: stay! stay! I entreat!"

His bright eyes flashed upon her for a moment with such dazzling light, that her look sought the ground: his head was bowed to her's. There were a few low whispered words none else might hear, and then, before she was aware he had left her side, the ladder was planted, the door burst open, one look was turned on her, and the burning building was entered. It was a moment of deep and awful anxiety—not a word was spoken, scarcely a breath drawn. Our heroine stood in speech-

less agony, with clasped hands, death-like cheek, and straining eyes, gazing on the burning building. There was a slight crash, the flames rose higher, and part of the roof fell in, and that too just over the only entrance.

A mingled shriek and groan burst from the spectators, half suppressed, and then succeeded by a still more awful silence, as all sought to catch the lightest sound. Helen uttered no shriek, but she threw one wild and searching glance around, as though to ask if none would save. What could have power to engage her attention at such a moment? What was there in the look of De Roos to rivet her interest? as he prevented her moving nearer the blazing cottage. Did it speak sympathy? or triumph? or horror? A wild hope gleamed upon her.

"Is there no possibility of forcing a way through the floor to the room below?" she asked eagerly, looking at De Roos.

"It must be useless!" he answered in a hurried tone. "All is over now! let me lead you away."

"I will try, ma'am," cried James Watts, rushing to the spot.

There was another brief pause; the suspense was dreadful. Helen spoke not, but she would not move; the remainder of the roof fell in; there was a wild scream, but a shout mingled with it. Dare she hope? Figures burst from the door of the lower room, sprang over the burning fragments that were scattered around, and, ere a question could be asked, the body of Nurse Smith, living, though insensible, was placed at her feet, and the bearer, exhausted with his exertions, sank beside it.

The dread, the horror, had been too much for Helen, and with a convulsive sigh she would have fallen, but for the protecting arm of De Roos.

A short time restored her to sense, and then every thought was for others. The lamentations of Nurse Smith, who had received no serious injury, were listened to and soothed; James Watts thanked and praised—for to her suggestion, and his exertions, aiding Mr. Elliott's own attempts, who had discovered a weak part in the floor, where had formerly been a trap door, was his safety to be attributed; and then the Mansels were comforted. When all this was done, as speedily as might be, Helen proposed returning to the house. Her first question had been if Mr. Elliott or Nurse were hurt? The former had answered for both in the negative? and had then retreated into a dark corner of the dimly lighted cottage, in which they were all assembled.

"Before I go, Mr. De Roos, may I trouble you to thank the people outside, in my name for their exertions."

He obeyed instantly, for it seemed to his mind a flattering distinction to be thus appointed. "Mr. Elliott!" she said in a low tremulous voice. He was by her side in an instant. She did not speak; I doubt if he wished it. Tears came to her relief; she struggled with the emotion, and looked up. She started; certainly few would have cared to stand in such a guise, before a critical observer. His wig was half burnt off, and his own hair on that side singed and blackened; as were his clothes. There were marks of burning on his face; one hand was placed in his bosom, and the other, though hanging down, concealed from her sight. One glance at this arrangement convinced Helen how much he was suffering.

"How unthinking, how selfish, I have been? You said you were not hurt, and I never remembered you were as considerate for others, as careless for yourself. I shall never forgive myself for what my delay has made you suffer. Let us hasten to the house," and she rose instantly to return, taking his offered arm.

"Do not blame yourself," he said in a low but earnest voice, "this is the happiest moment of my life! Believe me, I suffer nothing!" She made no answer: she did not thank him for his late bravery, though she had thanked him for his lesser service to the Mansels. Was not this strange? Perhaps it might be; but I never heard that he complained of it. Therefore, why should we?

"What carriage is that?" asked Mr. Mahon. "Suppose I hail it to take you to the house."

"It is coming here by my orders," said Elliott. "I feared Miss St. Maur would be fatigued, and dispatched a messenger accordingly."

The hand that rested on his arm slightly pressed it, but still no thanks were spoken.

"I have fulfilled your wishes!" said De Roos.

"I am much obliged for the trouble you have taken."

The carriage came with no lagging speed. De Roos made no comment on its coming; but handing our heroine in, took his seat beside her; whilst Elliott would have given place to Mr. Mahon, had not that gentleman's good-nature prevented it.

Helen waited for none to hand her from the carriage, but springing out almost before the steps were let down, disappeared, and ere the gentlemen had answered a quarter of the

questions asked them in the drawing-room, she had returned with the most approved remedies in her hand.

The spirits of turpentine, and the cotton, &c. &c. were applied by herself, with a grace, a gentleness, a sympathy with his suffering, that might have reconciled the most sensitive as to pain, and the most dull as to finer sensations. Every other feeling seemed absorbed in the desire to alleviate his pain, and whatever the gentleman himself might fancy, it is a doubt if she would not have shown equal attention had another stood in his place.

As her task was completed, and she raised her eyes, as she inquired if he were sure he had received no further injury, then, and not till then, did a deep blush spread over her before pale cheek; and an acute observer might have fancied a slight shade of reserve in her after manner. But no motive existed sufficiently powerful to damp the kindness which marked her character.

"Mr. De Roos, I shall not permit either you or Mr. Elliott to leave Hurlestone to-night: that would indeed be an ineffaceable stain on my hospitality, after the good service you have rendered. Mr. Mahon will be kind enough to play the host, and Mr. Elliott must submit quietly to my arrangement. Watson, my dear father's old servant, shall sit up in his room and be his nurse. No doubts! no debates! no fresh projects! my will is imperative: and now, good night, for it is late, and we must all be weary."

"Rebellion to such a delightful order would be out of the question," replied De Roos, with more even than his wonted grace and animation; as he opened the door for her departure, and gazed on her retiring steps.

Mr. de Roos spoke and looked no more than the truth. The proposition was one of the most pleasing that could have been made, as it not only convinced him, from the command to stay having been addressed to himself, that he had not been eclipsed in her estimation by Elliott's bravery, but it would indicate to the world a degree of intimacy and consideration with the heiress of Hurlestone, which, with all his endeavours, he had not yet been able to obtain. It is marvellous how flattered vanity and self-love will, at times, deceive even the most acute! But high hopes could not make him unwary.

A letter addressed to Lord Fitzallan was in the post early in the morning, and the postscript urged an instant answer.

The breakfast of the next morning was later than was

wont at Hurlestone. Mr. de Roos was one of the first who appeared, and the hostess one of the last.

Mr. Elliott announced himself as quite well; but his appearance, despite the aid of the toilette, showed marks of his conflict of the night before, and he was certainly the very antipodes of an Adonis. Mr. de Roos on the contrary seemed, like the fabled phoenix, to have won fresh brilliancy from the fire—a brilliancy which assuredly was not diminished by his observing in Miss St. Maur's questions after his companion's health, an interest rather below than above par.

A Talleyrand may be deceived, a Metternich out-Metterniched; aye, even by pure common-place simplicity. True, Elliott looked satisfied; but then he always considered him dull of apprehension.

"Poor nurse Smith!" said Helen; "I have had some trouble to persuade her Mansel did not intend she should be burnt, but was only so bewildered by his own misfortune as to forget she had kindly come up to nurse his wife. I could not undertake to deliver her thanks to you, Mr. Elliott, but have promised she shall render them in person."

The breakfast was lingered over. Mr. de Roos was so delightful—none were weary—but an appointment at length obliged him to depart, and Mr. Elliott accompanied him.

"To get a new wig, I suppose," remarked one of the ladies.

"The rest of the party soon took their leave; the Mahons drove home to see the children, and Helen was left alone.

Every order was given for the morrow's fête, and she had nothing more to do.

She sat for some time silent and motionless; the room was close—she threw up the window—the air brought no relief; she sauntered into the conservatory, but her flowers could no longer rivet her attention. She took up a book and after looking at it some minutes, wondered it did not interest her—and found it was an army list. What could be the matter? Was she miserable? No, certainly not! Was she happy? She could not tell. She was nervous and agitated. Bright flames, and brighter looks, were flashing across her sight. The incidents of the past night had been too much for her: yes, it must be that. She would seek employment, and she took up a purse she was netting for her cousin. The door was flung open in a hurried manner, and her cousin himself stood before her.

"A thousand, thousand welcomes, dear Robert!" extend-

ing both hands as she spoke. "I began to fear you would not be present at my fête."

There was no resisting the warmth of her welcome; and if there had been a frown on his brow or a curl on his lip, both vanished at the spell of her cordiality.

"Would my absence have grieved you so very much then?"

"Would it not? What would my fête be without my cousin? But I will not be tempted to say what a favourite that cousin is!"

"Cousin! cousin! cousin! nothing but cousin! I wish I were not your cousin."

"Oh! so do I; I wish you were my grand-father."

"Psha!" and he turned away half pettishly from her arch glance.

There was a pause and then he spoke abruptly, with a dash of ill humour.

"By the way, Helen, why are you not looking pale, and playing interesting, after your perils of the past night?" and he looked searchingly at her. "Your cheek is glowing like a burning mountain."

"You are in a fiery fantastic mood this morning, cousin of mine! It is not the first time my cheek has glowed at the presence of one I valued; and I know of no personal peril last night, though there was enough to make the sternest pale."

"No peril! What, not when you were standing, like the lady in a sign of one of the insurance offices, surrounded by flames, and a Mr. de Roos rushed in like a salamander or a fiery dragon, and brought you out on his tail? and then you fainted; and then he knelt by your side, and vowed if you died that that fire should be his funeral pile; and then you opened your eyes and quenched his fiery resolve with a torrent of tears, and told him to claim his reward; and it is to be claimed to-morrow before the assembled villagers."

Helen laughed her own light happy laugh, so witching and so musical!

"And from whom might my cousin hear this beautiful invention? Surely it cannot be original!"

"Some of the credit rests with your favourite, Mrs. Jones: she saw it with her own eyes, or heard it with her own ears, I forget which."

"Or invented it with her own head. An author seem to think one volume sufficient to prove a deficiency of invention in Lord Byron; but it would require thousands to prove a

deficiency in Mrs. Jones. Remember, she is your favourite, not mine."

"My favourite! I detest the woman!"

"You might as well enter into a coalition with Hunt and Cobbett, and expect to be thought an ultra Tory. You pretend to dislike, despise, and disbelieve her, yet listen to and credit every tale that suits at all with your own ideas."

"I did not say I did credit it."

"You did not say so, certainly."

He bit his lip.

"Then you really were in no peril last night?"

"No other than the dread of seeing dear old nurse perish in the flames."

"Who saved her?"

"Mr. Elliott."

"Elliott! Elliott! Oh! I know now," he muttered.

"What part did Mr. de Roos perform then?"

"He stood in a graceful attitude, with a cloak and hat to defend him from the night air, restraining me from approaching too near the fire, and afterwards thanking the villagers at my request. Now tell me what Mrs. Jones did really say, for I suspect you may divide the merit of invention."

He coloured. "No, no! I will not detract from her merit; besides, I have a million other things to talk of."

He might feel reassured at her manner of relating the services of De Roos: he might fear he was treading on perilous ground, and that it would be better to turn the conversation.

"For whom is that purse intended?"

"For a wayward wight, if he will be good and deserve it."

"I will be his warranty; and now tell me all the arrangements for your fête."

She resumed her netting; and question and answer succeeded in harmonious succession for some time.

At length he asked, "Has Alford had the whole of the mangement, or has Mr. de Roos assisted?"

"Your suggestions, and the experience of Mr. de Roos have rather assisted him, with the addition, of course, of my invention, wisdom, and activity."

"Of course," he said drily, rose, and walked to the window, then returning in a few moments he stopped just before her, fixing his eyes full upon her, and assuming a careless air.

"One of the lies of the day, Helen, is that Colville-lodge is to furnish Hurlestone with a master."

The young lady happened at the instant to be particularly

engaged undoing an obstinate knot, and her little foot played rather impatiently at the delay, as it might seem. No remark was returned to the observation. How could she speak when so momentarily employed? For my part, I think a knot one of the most troublesome things in existence, and count Alexander a wiser man than Phrygian monarch.

The gentleman appeared to think this silence uncourteous, to say the least—some people are so touchy. He spoke therefore again in a louder tone.

"The whole county says Miss St. Maur is to be the present Mrs. De Roos, the future Lady Fitzallan."

The knot was undone, the foot was still, the silk again wound round her fingers, and the lady looked up, as she answered.

"The whole county may lie under a mistake. But is this the only fabrication of the day that has reached your ears? The whole town, says Lady Ann Norwood, is to be mistress of Stanmore."

He turned away from her arch glance in confusion, and vainly endeavoured to look indignant; angry he was.

"The whole town lies! You could not believe it!"

"Why not? It is not the first time you have indulged in an interlude after a tragedy."

He bit his lip, and paced up and down the room in anger, for there was too much of truth in her remark to make it agreeable.

The entrance of Mrs. Hargrave, who had chosen breakfast in her own room, Alford, and some other visitors, prevented further private conversation, and Helen's kind attentions to her cousin, her anxiety to please him, and her ready compliance with some of his whims, and most of his wishes, soon restored him to good-humour, in appearance at least; for if he could not wholly banish his suspicions he saw the necessity of concealing them.

"Have you any idea that Mr. Dormer thinks of being here to-morrow, Alford?" inquired Helen as they stood apart.

"Now that is some mischief of Catharine's, because, knowing her dislike to Percy, I would not satisfy her curiosity. Make but a sign and he shall be here."

"Heaven forbid! I would not Robert and he should meet here for the world! My fears and not my wishes, induced the question."

"You promised not to be controlled by Robert."

"There are points in which I will be controlled by none."



"I understand you," he said, half piqued, half laughing; "but if I must not control, of course I may advise." He hesitated a moment, and then continued; "De Roos is here a great deal, and people begin to imagine—"

"Do they only begin? I flattered myself they had nearly ended. Who forced Mr. De Roos upon me, by insisting on his being one of my aides-de-camp?"

"Well! well! I confess it was very foolish of me, but after this fête you can prevent his coming so often."

"I am not in the habit of being rude without a cause, and you seem too changeable in your opinions to be a fitting guide."

"I do not think so well of him as I did at first, I own."

"Why not?" and he thought she asked the question too anxiously.

"Oh, I do not know exactly,

The reason why I cannot tell,  
But I do not like that Doctor Fell;"

and he tried by a laugh to cover a little confusion.

"That is unlucky," she said coolly; "but as consistency is not the fashion, you may change again. You are perhaps not aware that I have a higher opinion of the talents and fascination of Mr. de Roos every day."

He looked vexed. "You know so little of him."

"I have met him most days, for three months. Do you know more?"

"Not much; but then men judge men so much more correctly than women. He is so polished that I should not wonder if he were a hypocrite."

"The more precious the stone the higher the polish it will take; but we waste time and words in this discussion. The opinion is not your own, and you do not deal fairly with me in advancing it as such. Does, or can Mr. Dormer bring a specific charge against him?" she asked with great earnestness.

"As I said once before, the arch fiend himself would fail in deceiving you, so I may as well confess. He knows nothing positive against him, but he has always felt convinced he was an artificial character; and indeed you must not be Mrs. de Roos."

"Was Mr. Dormer ignorant of the report? You hesitate—I am answered. A peaceful life I am like to lead, under the command of Messrs. Dormer, Euston, Alford, and Col! It is

fortunate I entertain no great horror of a state of single blessedness."

"Nay, nay, Helen!" trying to laugh the matter off as a jest, "we are not such very hard masters. You can have Dormer or me."

"And what would Robert say? Mr. Dormer I will not have, and I opine that you would not have me."

He coloured, and turned away to avoid her look. She was going, but he detained her.

"You do not really feel a—a—" he hesitated, "a *pénchant*, or whatever it is to be called, for De Roos?"

"I never said I did; but I know not how you can expect to be my confidant."

"Perhaps I was presumptuous; but promise then to lend no favour to his suit."

"I am ashamed you should think me capable of giving such a pledge. If I understand Mr. De Roos, he will never sue to me."

Alford shook his head, vexed and disappointed. "Others think differently."

"Time will show who thinks correctly; but these are conversations which ill suit my ideas of womanly delicacy."

"Then you will say nothing to satisfy Dormer?"

"Mr. Dormer could never have presumed to send a message to me on such a subject; and from yourself you can say what you please."

"I have to tell him then anything but what pleases me, or will please him. He will be much grieved."

"I know of nothing which ought to grieve him."

"To tell you the whole truth then, he will never submit, with common patience to your union with De Roos."

"I never suspected Mr. Dormer of submitting with common patience to any thing he did not fancy!" she said indignantly; "and as a friend I bid you warn him that he has neither right nor power to interfere. Remember, I admit not the truth of the report, though I deem it right to check impertinence."

It was such a rare thing to see Helen ruffled, that Alford felt he must be in the wrong.

"I dare say you are right, dear Helen; but you must be generous, and forgive my anxiety for your happiness."

"And for your friend too?" extending her hand with a smile.

"Yes, but you must not blame him; with a more skilful mbassador, he would not have appeared to merit censure."

"I doubt that; but let me hear no more of such things: believe me, he cannot have a more sincere friend."

With this Alford was obliged to be content, as he felt a further urging would be useless, imprudent, and indelicate.

"Now I recollect, I have a marvellously kind message from my wayward sister. She sends a thousand loves, and so forth; says she is quite recovered, and will help to entertain your guests to-morrow. She seems to have a wondrous loving fit all of a sudden! I hope it may last."

"It would be a libel on my perfections to doubt it."

## CHAPTER VI.

The pride, too, of her step, as light  
Along the unconscious earth she went,  
Seem'd that of one born with a right  
To walk some heavenlier element,  
And tread in places where her feet  
A star at every step should meet.

MOORE.

The secret sympathy,  
The silver link, the silken tie,  
That heart to heart, and mind to mind,  
In body, and in soul can bind.

SCOTT.

Like O'Rourke's noble fare,  
Which can ne'er be forgot,  
By those who were there  
And by those who were not.

THE day of the fête dawned, and it seemed as if Helen St. Maur were a prodigious favourite of Dame Nature's. It was a day of days! Not a cloud to frighten even the most fearful, and holiday dresses were donned without the slightest nervous dread lest they should be spoilt. It was neither too hot nor too cold; the old failed to anticipate coughs, and the young anticipated pleasures innumerable. A poetic fancy might have deemed that the trees, the flowers, the grass, "Earth, sky and water," were endowed with a brighter beauty in honour of the day. Even Mr. Dalton was less satirical, Mr. Carleton less pompous, and Lady Catharine Alford and Mr.

Robert Euston in good humour, at least for the first half hour. Amusements had been provided in the house, and out of the house: nothing that could prevent weariness or dulness had been omitted. There were cricket, and bowls, and foot races, archery, and billiards, with prizes for the winners. The flower gardens were thrown open, and gayly decorated boats rode lightly at anchor, or skimmed gracefully over the placid lake, bearing a gay and joyous company. The rich and the poor mingled happily together; for the villagers of Hurlestone, ungalled by oppression, and unwounded by insolence, looked not with envy on the possessions of their superiors. The St. Maurs had ever been kind and liberal: faults they had had, but the poor had never been forgotten. The dependent and the protector had ever been bound together by ties of gratitude and sympathy. •

Schools had been early established, not merely carried on by hirelings, but ever over-looked by the ladies of the family. Not exactly charity schools; for, fearful of destroying the independence and honest pride of the peasantry, payment was required from all admitted, and the parents supplied with the means, when needful. The cottages were made comfortable; their inhabitants taught to consider parish aid a disgrace, except to the aged or imbecile; every petition was listened to, if not complied with; work found to prevent idleness; and—but why proceed? In a word, it was the beau ideal of a village, and Helen was idolized. We do not mean to say that Hurlestone was as free from noxious passions, as Ireland from noxious reptiles; but that the good so strongly preponderated, that the evil gave up the contest in despair, and the irreclaimably bad left it for some field of action better suited to their views. Helen was the life of all: she was every where, and every thing. Now condoling with the old; now hoping with the young; receiving the congratulations poured from all, with a tear or a smile, as fitted best. This was no splendid feast, no pompous pageant, no idle mockery; her own warm heart, spread its bright glow over the whole scene; and it was this that made every thing about her so touching and so beautiful. There had been no needless expense: twining evergreens were the only ornaments, and there was a simple elegance in the whole, that suited well with the sylvan scene, the beautiful woods, and the noble-looking mansion. The most humble greeting met with a kindly answer: she knew all, and she asked for all, as if those spoken of were first and foremost in her thoughts.

All held themselves happy who could obtain even but one sweet look, and she passed among the crowd a something brighter than a smile, more touching than a tear. She annoyed none by awkward allusions, or still more awkward questions. She asked not a widow for her husband; an orphan for her parents; a childless mother for her family. To Alford's amusement and admiration, she remembered the genealogy of all the Betty Taylors, Sukey Smiths, and Kitty Tates in the county: at least, so he asserted.

Entering into no amusement herself, her presence gave fresh ardour to all; and, to please the players, her hand gave the prizes, with words so flattering to the victors and so consoling to the vanquished, that it was matter of doubt which was the most to be envied.

As Helen was passing from one group to another, and, for the first time that day alone, she was met by her cousin, looking chafed and vexed.

"Helen," he said hurriedly, "my place this day is by your side, and I leave it no more."

She looked her surprise.

"Indeed, but you must, dear Robert: I want you even now to go to the cricketers."

"Then we go together. Even the women and children have it on their lips that you send me from you, whilst De Roos and his minion are ever by your side. You put me off by your fooling yesterday; but you shall not do so to-day."

"What can you propose by this violence? and at such a time!"

He took no heed of her appeal, but looked fiercer than before; and she felt herself turning pale with fear.

"I assigned Mr. De Roos a more distant and busy employment than yourself, and——"

He interrupted her fiercely: "I want no explanation; we are together the rest of the day, and then let me see if De Roos or his beggarly minion, Elliott, dare approach."

Endeavouring to control her terror, she was on the point of assuming a commanding tone, as a desperate chance for maintaining peace, when a slight rustling among the shrubs caused her to turn, and there to her dismay stood Elliott himself close beside them, with a fire in his eye and a burning spot on his usually pale cheek, which too well attested that the conversation had been overheard. Trembling with agitation, her usual presence of mind for a time forsook her, and pale and speechless she leant against a tree, with only

power to turn an imploring look on Elliott—from her cousin she had no hope.

The look was not in vain, though higher principles would, in a moment's space, have rendered it useless. Yet, outraged as he had been—for of all terms the "minion of De Roos" was the one he could least patiently brook—and quick as was his natural temper, passion could not be controlled without a struggle.

There stood the young men fronting each other—the flashing eye fixed on the flashing eye, yet without speaking or moving—and there leant Helen, still pale and speechless, with eyes fixed, and trembling frame, watching the slightest movement. Robert piqued himself on never having quailed beneath a look; and yet, after a few brief moments, his eye gazed less steadily, and even for an instant sought the ground. Nor was the look of his confronter without a change: the fiery glare of passion gradually calmed, and the gaze, though still intent, bespoke firm and high resolve rather than anger. Helen would have moved towards them, but she trembled too much to accomplish her wish. Her action attracted the attention of both, and in a moment Elliott was by her side, his arm offered for her support, and his looks expressing any thing but a hostile feeling. Robert advanced too, but, seeing himself anticipated, stood still with a sullen look and contracted brow.

"Fear nothing!" whispered her supporter, and then said aloud:

"Miss St. Maur is faint; will you assist me to aid her to that seat, and remain with her whilst I bring a glass of water?"

Mr. Euston gave his arm in silence; but the sight of her agitation, and the calm though proud tone of Mr. Elliott, had wrought a great change in his feelings and manner.

"I am better now," she said, as they led her into a rustic temple, and she saw Elliott about to depart. "It is best my guests should know nothing of this."

"Certainly."

Some ornamental china of little value decorated the temple, and, snatching up a small cup, he left the place.

"Oh Robert! will you leave me no peace but in the grave?"

He turned and looked upon her. It was a strong expression—stronger than the occasion seemed to warrant; but the still deathlike paleness shocked and alarmed him, and per-

haps he flattered himself that he might claim much, if not all the interest and terror she had shown. A total revolution was effected in his feelings.

"Helen, dearest Helen, forgive me! I heard some one say De Roos was always with you, and I could not bear it."

"And is the peace of both ever to be at the mercy of every idle saying? It is of this I complain."

"Is it an idle saying?" And he seemed inclined to relapse into sullenness.

"It is worse than idle, it is false. I have not spoken to Mr. de Roos these three hours; but if I had, what then? It should matter—it can matter—nothing to you. Am I never to pass a day in your presence without a storm? If so, we must meet no more."

"Helen! Helen! you will make no allowance for my love."

"Talk not to me of a love that thinks but of self, and is at best but an intermittent fever."

He turned away for a moment, then taking both her hands in his, looked imploringly in her face.

"And you will not forgive me, Helen? And is this day, that rose so brightly on me, to set in darkness?"

"A few moments since, and you would have had it set in blood."

"I own it. Had De Roos crossed me then—but do not discourage my penitence—banish me not! Mark not this day by the separation of those nearest in blood."

The tears rose to her eyes, and the hands he still held pressed his.

"You say truly, Robert; those who stand so near should be dear in proportion. No one but yourself shall separate us, and you must grieve me no more."

"Thank you, thank you, Helen! This is like yourself, and well shall it be repaid."

"And Mr. Elliott?" she questioned, as a faint colour tinged her cheek.

Before he could answer, Mr. Elliott returned with the water, which she took from his hands with a look of thanks, whilst her cousin turned away.

"I am quite well now," said Helen, though languor and anxiety were still visible.

"Then, will you allow us to conduct you to your guests? Your absence will occasion inquiries."

He held out his arm as he spoke, and her cousin did the same.

Did Mr. Elliott mean then to allow those words to pass unnoticed? She turned on him a penetrating look: he coloured and looked down, and she shook her head.

"Come, Helen," said her cousin, seeing she did not move.

A vivid colour flashed over her pale cheek, and then it faded again, as she looked from one to the other in silent embarrassment. Mr. Euston looked ashamed, but said nothing. There was a rather long silence, awkward to all. Helen looked timidly and imploringly at Elliott. He answered the appeal so as to reassure, and then, finding it impossible to avoid an explanation in her presence, addressed her cousin.

"Miss St. Maur requires a longer rest. And now let me request an explanation of some words that accidentally reached me. If I mistake not, you called me the 'beggary minion of De Roos.' Poor I am; but poverty arising from no misconduct, should win sympathy, not insult, from a noble mind. A beggar I will never be; but will command fortune by my own exertions, or die in the endeavour. A minion of De Roos I am not; and he who told you so, said falsely. We are not even friends, and I would rather crouch beneath the lash, than bend to him. Report speaks Mr. Euston high-minded and generous; if so, he will either give up the author of the calumny, or nobly retract it, on my indignant denial."

Helen trembled at what this address might produce; but aware of the touchiness and tenderness of men on such occasions, prudently refrained from interference.

Indignant as was his denial of the justice of the epithet applied to him, and firmly and openly as he had claimed its retraction, there was nothing in the slightest degree irritating or overbearing in his words or manner. It was the firm and manly, yet noble and gentlemanly appeal of one high-minded being to another. Mr. Euston felt it was such; he looked down; his colour rose, he was silent; then, with a sudden movement he held out his hand, and looked up with a frank and open expression. "Mr. Elliott, I was wrong. I knew nothing to warrant what I said—I feel it was unjust. Are you satisfied?"

"More than satisfied!" and the extended hand was grasped with warmth. "Your cousin's portrait was not a partial one."

"Did Helen praise me, and to you?"

"Indeed did she, and made me anxious for your friendship;



but this is no time to speak of that. Perhaps Miss St. Maur is now sufficiently recovered to walk?"

"I think I am," she said blushing. "With two such kind friends and careful nurses I may venture any where."

"I fear, Helen, I am not always as kind as I should be."

"But you will be for the future, when the fit is not upon you," and she placed her arm confidently in his.

"I dare not promise, but will try."

"Now have I more hope of you than ever."

"Some influential person is wanted among the cricketers," said one of her guests to Helen.

"I will go directly," replied her cousin, "and confide Helen to your charge," addressing Elliott; and then added in a low whisper, "You are safe with him."

She looked down, but he did not stay to see how she looked.

The manly conduct of Elliott had impressed him in his favour; but it is doubtful if his openly avowed dislike to De Roos, and even his personal appearance, had not been more influential; so little do we inquire concerning the secret springs of thought.

"Bless you, sweet child!" said nurse Smith, approaching; "why you look more like an angel than a mortal; and there is not one but what says you are the best and most beautiful. And here is the gentleman, too, I have been wanting to thank."

"As beautiful as your child, nurse? A second angel?" he inquired with a smile.

"I did not quite say that," replied the old woman, rather puzzled between her gratitude and her sincerity. "But then, who is as beautiful as my Miss Helen? And besides, you got hurt in the fire, and they say was sickly before, and it is a sweet smile you have any how; and you helped up Kitty Rogers when she fell down, as kind as if she had been a lady, though the gentleman you are with, and some more of them, laughed."

"Ever kind! ever the same?" said Helen. He looked rather confused.

"So, in time then, nurse, you think I may become nearly as beautiful as your Miss Helen?"

"I don't know quite that, Sir, though time does do wonders; but handsome is as handsome does, and only for you, Sir, and Miss Helen, I had not been here to-day. I wish I could thank you both as I should."

"You owe no thanks to me, nurse; it was all Mr. Elliott."

"No! no! Miss Helen. Don't I know you prayed them to save me for your sake, or he would not have risked his life for an old woman like me. Well, heaven bless you both! for you have warm kind hearts indeed, and nurse will pray for you all her life;" and she took a hand of each, and pressed them together, whilst her tearful eyes were raised to heaven.

For a moment Helen's hand lingered in the grasp of Elliott; it was then hastily withdrawn, and with a crimson blush she turned away.

If the gentleman meditated an excuse for what had been the act of another, opportunity was denied by the approach of a noisy party from the archery ground.

"I congratulate the fair Diana on having been victorious," said Alford to Miss Carleton. The young lady tossed her head: "Pray don't trouble yourself, my Lord. I understand your laughing. I know you said I was jolly all over, quite *enête* and very posy. For my part, I don't admire ghosts," glancing at Lady Catharine, who was near, leaning on Mr. de Roos, and who had received too much of his attention not to be envied and disliked. "And as for being *entêtê*, if I am, I am not very unlike my neighbours."

A titter ran round the group, and Alford was preparing for mischief, when Helen interposed. "This is only a mistake of Mrs. Jones's, and is like her persisting I was very weary, despite my contradiction, because Alford had told her I was 'well tired.' You will scarcely object to having been declared *jolie, bien têtê, et posé*, and should blame him for not using English words to express his admiration."

Alford looked a denial, but said nothing. The dinner-bell rang, and the guests were soon seated. As the *fête* was for the poor, and not for the rich, to their comfort and enjoyment Helen's principal cares were directed; whilst the latter, for once, made it their pleasure to receive little more distinction than their lowly neighbours. Two long tables, with Robert and Alford as presidents, and Messrs. Carleton and Daniel as croupiers, accommodated all the villagers, and a third, headed and tailed, as Mr. Dalton said, by Lord Marston and Mr. de Roos, supplied seats for all the fashionables of the county.

Attended by Lady Marston, whose benevolent pleasure in the scene seemed to endow her with strength to endure the fatigue, and escorted by Mr. Elliott and one or two others, Helen walked round to see all were supplied; and then, just tasting the wine presented to her at each table, she drank the

health of all assembled, and expressed her good wishes with a grace and warmth that gave an interest to a sometimes heartless ceremony. The shouts, the prayers, and blessings that rose in answer, were deafening.

She received them with the same feelings with which they were tendered, looking, as nurse said, "like a rose with the dew upon it."

The banquet done, dancing commenced, led off by Helen with the latest bridegroom, a young farmer of high character.

"May I not hope for your hand the next dance, Miss St. Maur?" said Mr. de Roos. "I have done your bidding well, and borne my banishment with exemplary patience."

"Then that is sufficient; virtue ever brings its own reward. I shall dance but one dance more, and that must be with my cousin."

He looked the vexation he felt, whilst Robert, who had not ventured to ask, led her off in triumph.

"How can you be such a fool, Helen, as to offer a premium for matrimony?" said Mr. Dalton. "You should read Malthus. I hear you have cajoled twelve fathers and mothers, and promised to portion three couple next month. Over-population will be the ruin of this country, and six people at least will have cause to hate you within the year."

"I hope not!" she replied, laughing. "What was to be done! You know I never could resist a love tale, and cried at five years of age, when I read of the Beast, who slugged up his tail and wiped his eyes because Beauty refused him."

"What would your rejected suitors say to this account of yourself?"

"If they could read the signs of the times, they would own it much more true than they are inclined to allow it now."

"I believe you are right. I trembled once, lest your first suitor, young Griffiths, should gain his cause."

"Why, if he had but pined and looked pale three months instead of one, and not married within four, he would have had little cause to despair; but I was only sixteen and a half then, and really believed pale interesting young gentlemen died for love. I am wiser now; one-and-twenty thinks differently, and I have learnt,

'That a lover rejected, a new love will get.'

"Are you quite sure your present notions of love and lovers are very sane?"

"Decidedly!"

He looked doubtful, she confused.

"I suspect perseverance and paleness would go a great way now."

"I own I should be loath that gentlemen should know what perseverance can effect, and this ignorance is for the happiness of all; for the love that could refuse a first time, would scarcely be sufficiently strong to survive the ills of life."

"Umph! Pray has it been your pleasure, or your precaution, which has detained de Roos from your side all this day?"

"Both!"

"And which was it that urged you to pursue the opposite course with his guest?"

"You are very curious!" she replied, trying to answer carelessly, though she knew her colour came and went.

"Mr. Elliott merits attention for his gallantry in saving nurse Smith, and Robert appointed him my personal Esquire."

"Umph!" said the old gentleman again, if possible more emphatically than usual. "Set the fox to watch the grapes! and not sour ones either! Set the wolf to guard the lamb. Some people are very wise: hey, Helen!"

"Some people are very silly!" and she withdrew herself from his detaining arm, and hastily joined the nearest group.

"Do pray hide me!" exclaimed Miss Carleton; there is that hideous Mr. Elliott coming; and I am so afraid. I am sure he wants to ask me to dance. He really is more ugly than ever, for there is a scar in his cheek, and such a wig! I wonder how he could choose such a thing! or how he can like to show himself. Do pray keep him away, Mr. de Roos!" and the young lady took his arm in her fright, unconsciously of course.

"Miss Carleton particularly admires your wig, Elliott, and is anxious to obtain its counterpart: she is also very desirous of dancing the next dance with you."

"La! Mr. de Roos! How can you tell such stories."

"Pray do not deny him the exercise of his most brilliant talent," replied Elliott, in a tone which whilst it humoured the jest conveyed to the ear of a person of tact, that it had been pursued far enough. "Of course I feel highly flattered by her admiration of my wig, and regret I cannot present her

with its counterpart; the good town of — furnishing no other like it or unlike it; and I fear I must transfer the honour of her hand to you, on account of my recent injuries. You had better join the set immediately; it is already half formed I see."

The revenge was complete. The polite Mr. de Roos could do no less than lead the fair lady towards the dancers, to the only half suppressed merriment of some of the observers.

"Well now," said she, pleased with her triumph, and half in humour with its cause, "really Mr. Elliott would not be so bad, if you would but instruct him a little."

"What crime have I committed, that I should be condemned to the task of instructing dancing dogs and waltzing bears? It is cruel to make me answerable for the defects of others."

"Most cruel; having a sufficient number of your own," remarked Mr. Dalton, as if speaking to himself.

"Helen, your fête has been as perfect as yourself," said Alford.

"A more sincere compliment than many I have received to-day, as the absence of Annie Grey has furnished it with one imperfection."

"Not exactly so," avoiding her look: "for the duty and affection which induce her to absent herself, making her excuse perfect, brings no imperfection on your fête."

"Sagely thought, and logically argued; there could be but one wiser plan, namely neither to think, nor argue on the subject. The lily of the valley is not fitted for an artificial atmosphere; and the exotics would rebel." She placed her hand on his arm with affectionate interest as she spoke.

"Psha! Helen. I hate thought and argument too, so come along and let us mystify the rustics."

"Farewell, dear Helen," said Lady Catharine. "I have not sought you to-day, but I have played my part right merrily amongst your guests, so that all are marvelling at my good-humour and condescension. Crowds fortunately see nothing but what glares, and you must forget the past, and never refer to it. Silence will be best for all."

"Yes, silence will be best," thought Helen, but she also thought, and thought justly, that pride not prudence had dictated the remark.

We will not weary the reader with a further detail of the fête; sufficient to say no accident occurred and there was more of inward satisfaction than always accompanies the outward

seeming. Every thing that was right was said and done on all sides, and by nine o'clock the villagers had left the park, after three beautiful cheers, as they called them, and a rather daring hope that they or their children might commemorate another coming of age.

Some of the higher company lingered still, though many had departed, despite the entreaties of the sentimentals, who declared the utter impossibility of catching cold on such an Italian evening.

"Do not let us be idle, Euston," said Alford. "I challenge you to a rowing match, and we will coax the ladies to honour us with their company, and be umpires. See how beautifully the gentle moon is shedding her pensive light, 'o'er wood and wild,' silvering the edges of the light ripples on the dark surface of the placid lake. What think you of that description, Miss Jones? I shall turn out Byron the Second. It was said on purpose for you. Come, Euston, come!"

"Let me join," said De Roos.

"Agreed! make your parties, and I will tease Helen to furnish shawls and cloaks for the Naiads."

"It is indeed a delicious evening for such sympathetic minds as prefer the tender melancholy of twilight to the dazzlingly vulgar glare of day," remarked *la belle Susanne* to Captain Montague Melville, on whose arm she leant. "Such an hour awakens the sympathies and coincidences of congenial and delicately strung minds, whose harmonious chords sound in unison, at the Promethean touch of feeling. Look at the etherial vault of heaven, 'So deeply, darkly, beautifully blue;' with all its tender fret-work of twinkling stars."

The gentleman looked as desired. To his eyes the sky was grey, rather than blue, but then poets and poetical young ladies may have less material eyes than other folks. Sympathies and coincidences of congenial and delicately strung minds! harmonious chords! Promethean touch! etherial vault of heaven, with its tender fret-work of twinkling stars! To be sure he did not understand all this, but then it sounded very grand, and must of course be very beautiful. Besides, to seem puzzled was vulgar! the three hundred and thirty-third never looked puzzled! so he put on a sentimental air, breathed a gentle sigh, and ventured to press the lady's arm.

"Susy," said her mother, in what she called an under tone, yet sufficiently loud to be heard by many, "I wish you would come home, for the night air is spoiling the bows to my bon-

net, and you know it cost thirty shillings; and la! if your own is not all of a smudge, and your hair hanging like dips."

The idea of a congenial and delicately strung mind, whilst talking of Promethean touches and etherial vaults, being dragged down to this material and vulgar world, by being told that her bonnet was all of a smudge, and her ringlets resembling dips! and that too in the presence of Captain Montague Melville, commander of a troop of the three hundred and thirty-third.

The trials of Job were nothing to it!

She fairly huffed her mother, turned her back, and affecting total unconsciousness of having been addressed, as well as of any cause for the smiles of the spectators, recommenced a sentimental effusion to the sympathetic militaire.

"Come, Helen!" said Alford, finding her attending to the pleasures and comforts of some of the elders in the drawing room, "collect all the shawls and cloaks, and come down with me to the lake; we are going to have a row in this delicious moonshine. 'Come trip it o'er the verdant lawn!'"

"That is, you mean to destroy half the young ladies by drowning, and half by consumption. No! no! I am too important a personage to trust myself on such an expedition. I will send you down cloaks and shawls, and have the directions of the Humane Society, and proper remedies ready: but pray lead your company down the temple walk, and not 'prank it o'er the dewy grass.'"

"Oh, but you must come too! it will be nothing without you. I am sure these guests will excuse you."

"Oh, certainly! we would not detain her on any account."

"Now, Elliott, take the other side;" and thus he bore off the laughing, and vainly remonstrating Helen.

Three boats were soon filled, quite as full as our heroine deemed prudent, and still Elliott, two other ladies, and herself, remained unaccommodated.

"We will soon make room!" said Alford; but the two ladies, hurt at not having been sooner seated, or suddenly seized with a prudent fit, found the air very cool, and insisted on returning; and not only that, but declared the path to the house was so intricate, that without Helen's guidance they could not possibly thread its mazes.

"Troublesome cats!" muttered his lordship. "I depute you, Elliott, to attend, and bring her safe back."

The ladies were conducted to the house, and after a moment's hesitation she accepted Elliott's arm, and prepared to

retrace her steps. No wonder the ladies dreaded to return alone, since Helen and Elliott, who were so much acquainted with the paths, either in the interest of conversation, or from some unlucky chance, took a wrong turn.

It is very strange! but some people are so stupid! so totally deficient in the organ of locality, as to go wrong fully as often as right.

Mr. Elliott took this opportunity of tendering the warm thanks of his friend Walsh, who through her kindness had now a prospect of acquiring an independence. Then the story of the Spanish patriot was more fully entered into; then Helen had to thank him for his forbearance towards her cousin, though aware, she said, that a higher motive than the wish to spare her had influenced him; and then, but no! we shall not commit such a breach of confidence as to relate more of the conversation; enough that it became so interesting, that neither remarked the increased wildness and beauty of the path, and both started, in the most innocent surprise, on the brink of a deep smooth stream that supplied the lake. They looked round on each other, and then on the ground, but neither spoke.

Silence may proceed from various causes; from terror, or awkwardness, or dislike, or delight, or from a feeling not exactly any of these, yet partaking of all. Who shall decide from what cause this silence was unbroken? It was a beautiful spot to which they had wandered thus unconsciously. They stood on a bank overlooking the silent stream, with a rich old wood above and around them. No spendthrift heir had levelled the pride of his ancestors; no needy proprietor had waked the echoes with the hollow sound of the destroying axe.

On the opposite side, the ground sloped upwards richly, but partially wooded; and admitting, occasionally, glimpses of the country beyond. The variety of the trees, and their different styles of growth, prevented monotony, and increased the beauty. Some rose stately and tall, as if disdaining the soil from whence they sprang; some spread their branches far and wide, as if in gratitude to the earth, and the dews of heaven; whilst others laved their boughs in the dark stream, some with the abandonment of sanctioned love, and some with the light and flickering movement of coquetry. The overhanging trees threw a deep shade over the stream; but there were spots where it seemed, in very joy, to mirror the grey and sometimes lightly clouded sky, with all its blazonry of stars: bright glimpses of a purer world, like our early dreams of heaven!



It was, as we have said, a wild and lovely scene, with nothing to break its enchantment; for not a sound was heard, save the melancholy note of the wood pigeon, and the deep breathing of the two beings, who stood with linked arms, and downcast eyes. They spake not to, they looked not at each other. But are there not senses more delicate, more intense, and more acute than sight and hearing? These are but senses of the body; the heart has finer senses of its own; and without a word or look, spirits mingle. Ay, and those feelings may become too exquisitely intense, and the heart may seek relief in more earthly thoughts.

A sigh startled both, and both looked inquiringly to learn from whom it proceeded, and then again both looked down. But the spell had been broken, and the lady spoke, and spoke hurriedly too. Did she fear a longer silence, or did she fear her companion's speech?

"Conversing about your interesting Spaniard, we have taken a wrong turn."

This was no wonderful discovery, and might have been made some minutes sooner, but of course the gentleman was too polite to say so, and after a slight pause she continued.

"Bran is impatient, having no taste for the beautiful, and I fear Alford will be the same. Our nearest way now is by water, and the stream will take us down without rowing, for which your hands are not sufficiently recovered. A boat is moored a little way down. Let us seek it!"

Her companion offered no objection; yet ere they departed, both cast "one long and lingering look behind." It is probable their feelings were the same.

They might never stand on that same spot again; or, if they should, the spell that had thrown its lustre over the last few moments, would have passed away. They might be there, the same in form but not in heart. Sorrow, or dread, or mistrust, might, ere then, have done its work. A storm might have blighted the splendours of their path; a whirlwind might have rent the bright wings of the Spirit of Hope; or worse, far worse to the thought of the young enthusiast, without a storm, without a convulsion, the cold dull spirit of the world might have chilled the finer feeling of the heart, and time have shown there is no eternity even in love; no certainty but selfishness and sorrow. And doth time show these things? To many, not to all! There are some hearts no time can chill, no intercourse with the cold mean world sink to the level of the common crowd. Is this belief a

truth, or nothing but a bright and brilliant dream? Alas, alas! I should be woe to answer. The beautiful powder must fall from the butterfly's wing—the delicate bloom be brushed from the fruit—the delicious fragrance of the opening flower evaporate; and the beauty, the fragrance the bloom of the young heart are not more lasting. Who can replace them? Not man! A chill will come over the heart—a blight pass across the spirit. And it is fitting that it should be so. This world is not our resting place, and man himself marred the beauty of paradise: his crimes brought the storm—his guilt made the desert. The beautiful dream of the enthusiast must fade; but the heavenly glow of love and charity abides with the Christian through sickness and through sorrow, through poverty and through wrong, even unto death.

They walked on in silence, brushing aside the branches that overhung the wild and lovely path. The silent scene had lost some of its beauty in their eyes, as we said before! for inward thought and melancholy presentiment had thrown its shadow over the present. I hate presentiment! It is a two-edged sword, marring the beauty of the present and the future.

Perhaps Helen hated it too, or perhaps she had a better reason for speaking. It might be the silence was getting awful, or perhaps only awkward; or she might speak from that strong and strange impulse which forces us to tell things long kept secret.

With all our power, we do not always pretend to read the thoughts of others, though we give a true and particular account of their actions.

To commence a conversation after such a silence might have been embarrassing even to Helen's high-bred elegance; but Bran, as if divining her trouble, broke the "awful pause" himself, by gazing on the moon, and then indulging in a melancholy howl.

"Hush, hush, Bran! How can you vex the silent night with any thing sounmelodious? Nothing but nightingales should be heard now, unless indeed it were 'a tale of the days of old.' What say you, Mr. Elliott? shall I enact the part of the *disceurs* of the ancient times, and tell you a tale of an ancestress of Bran's?"

He gave a smiling assent to her playful question, though, "I guess," he rather suspected her of trifling, and would have preferred something more in unison with the pensive hour and his own thoughts

'Once upon a time, not quite a thousand years ago a little,

girl was walking with her maid by the banks of a stream, somewhere—no matter where—in merry England. We will not say whether the child was fair or not—her outward seeming has nothing to do with my tale; enough she was the only child of doting parents, and, it might be, a little wayward withal, capriciously longing for what she could not obtain, and, with the pride and generosity of youth, a pigmy hater of tyranny and tyrants. It was a bright sunny day, and the wayward child wandered on, filling her hands with the wild flowers that bloomed around, as gay as the birds and butterflies themselves. At last she came to some idle and ill natured boys, who, to the horror of her infant hatred of oppression, were delighting themselves with the cries of a miserable looking puppy, on whom they were inflicting various torments. The child, used to command, made what the nurse considered a splendid speech to the riotous boys on their cruelty and wickedness, and then entreated them to leave the poor puppy in peace. The speech and the entreaties were alike vain.

"She offered to purchase the puppy; this promised more success; but, after some whispering, ten shillings were asked for the poor little thing, and on inquiry neither nurse-maid or child could produce more than sixpence. The boys laughed, shouted, and continued the sport. The poor puppy cried more piteously than before, and the child promised, if they would but bring it to the inn, her parents should pay the price, exorbitant as it was; but, either fearful of punishment, or enamoured of cruelty, they declined the proposal. Between anger and sorrow the child was well nigh as miserable as the poor little 'beastie' itself, and yet was loth to go, though the boys threatened both her and nurse. She was in despair, when a kind brave boy of gallant bearing, so much taller than herself that she had to throw off her curls and put back her head to look into his face, stood forward as the champion of herself and the little animal. First he soothed the child with words that sounded kind even to one accustomed to the accents of love, and then, with a bold bearing and commanding tone, that won, respect, if not absolute obedience, he insisted on better treatment for the puppy; and proposed that, as none wished its life, it should be yielded to the girl for her sixpence and another he produced. There was a something so noble in word and look that he won over all but one churl, the oldest of the set, who would only consent after a fight. The terrified child clung to him

in tears, begging this might not be; and the gallant boy, not wishing to distress her more, yet willing to fight the churl though double his size, stood in doubt and indecision, when the others, unwilling to lose the money, rebelled; and the challenger seeing his rule had passed away, threw the puppy into the river and ran away. The river was too deep and rapid to allow a hope of life to the small and injured puppy: the brave boy jumped in, and though carried some way down by the current, landed at length with the rescued victim, which he presented to the little girl, at the same time throwing his money among the boys who had lent him assistance to land.

"The little girl's tears ceased to flow; her terror was forgotten in her gratitude and admiration; and having gained one wish, her next was that the young hero should return with her to her parents, and receive their thanks as well as her own. Her urgent entreaties and childish arts had nearly vanquished the brave boy's shyness, when a loud and peremptory voice called him away. Her further persuasions were vain; not even a delay was allowed; so the children could only shake hands, and both promise—and one kept her promise—to think often of the other. The little girl returned with the puppy to her parents, and told her tale. Every inquiry was made after the brave boy, that they might show their gratitude, but none could give any information concerning him, and their gratitude was unshown, though not unfelt.

"That puppy was Bran's mother; that brave kind boy was Grahame Elliott; and that wayward child—need I tell her name?"

"Oh no! no! I was senseless not to have guessed it sooner. I should have known that the feelings you awakened were not at all of the present; that the sweet memory of the past, mingling with my admiration, made it a feeling of the heart, not a fancy of the eye. I felt your loveliness, but I dreamt not that you were the bright and beautiful child, whose bold and generous pleading for the oppressed—and more, perhaps, whose warm expressions of artless gratitude—won me from a fit of sullen moodiness, grieving that none loved, and none looked kindly on me. Often whilst with you have looks and tones made me half a believer in the wild and beautiful fancy, that we had met and loved in some prior state of being; and yet, fool that I was! I never guessed the happy truth."|

"For years the image of that lovely child dwelt in my mind with more than the brightness of hope itself; and I never quite abandoned the belief of a future meeting. It was so delightful to be thanked as she had thanked me; and she had promised I should be like a brother; that her parents should be mine, and that every one should love me. True these were the simple words of an artless child; the overflowing of a young warm heart, rating too highly a common act. But was it wonderful the lonely boy lived on those words for years?"

"Mr. Stanton insisted on my going, and we left the neighbourhood immediately. He robbed me of the pleasure of meeting; he could not deprive me of the pleasure of having met. It is strange that the lonely should not recognize, and the happy should. It is to this, then, I owe all your kindness!"

"Of course, all to the past and none to the present!" and she smiled archly. "But I fear I do not merit much credit for having known you; your name and acts deserve more praise than my penetration. To confess the truth, I forgot boys must become men, and always pictured you to my mind the same as when I saw you."

"Your disappointment must have been great then; no kindness, short of yours, could have withstood the shock. It is wonderful that the same bright being, who influenced my destiny in childhood, must influence it in after life. Yes!" he continued, with a deep and impetuous earnestness, "the hope of the boy is the hope of the man; the past and the future centre in one. I spoke not of this in my tale, it was too cherished, almost too holy, to be told another, even though that other were you. That hope is daring—too daring. I fear its expression may banish me from your presence for ever, yet even with this dread —."

"We have reached the boat," said Helen, hastily, withdrawing her trembling arm from his. "Pray unmoor it quickly, or Alford will be impatient;" and she turned away her head.

"Have I been too daring? too presumptuous? Am I utterly despised?" he questioned, and would have taken her hand, but she folded her shawl round her at the instant, and was silent.

"Miss St. Maur," he said, in a melancholy and anxious tone. "My fate is in your hands."

"Not your actions, it seems, or you would unmoor," said

she hurriedly, assuming a lighter tone. "I am impatient to join the party on the lake."

"Then you will not forgive?" he said, in a tone of deep feeling.

"I am wearied with the day's exertions, Mr. Elliott, and little inclined for further conversation; and you are not one to force it on me."

There was a melancholy appeal in these words, which would have won its way against a sterner spirit.

"You do me justice. I would not pain you for the world's brightest lures; but will you not speak one word? Will you not say you forgive my presumption?"

"There is no presumption to forgive!" she said, after a pause, in a low faltering tone; "and now unmoo!"

There were a few murmured hopes and thanks, such as hearts thrill to hear; and the little boat was unmoored in an instant. She would have sprung into it unassisted, but his appealing look altered her intention, and her hand was placed lightly in his; but light and instantaneous as was the touch, he felt it tremble, and with all the exaggeration of an ardent spirit, he revelled in the future. Bran jumped in as a thing of course, placing himself at the feet of his mistress; and Elliott, pushing from shore, allowed the boat to float down the stream. Neither spoke; but though the boat made little progress, they did not find its passage slow. Thoughts were in the hearts of each that were never there before, that never might be there again.

The narrow stream gradually widened as they approached the lake, and the sound of merriment came on the breeze. Both roused themselves; and the trembler of the moment past became calm and self-possessed.

"The turn round this thicket brings us into the lake; and as your hands must not have the toil of rowing, just keep the boat steady and call to Alford, who will come and take us on board."

"I am quite equal to rowing, and the other boats are full."

"Then Alford shall arrange for some to take our places; your hands must not be tortured. My will is law, to-day at least," she said, with something of her former playfulness.

They turned round the thicket, and a beautiful sight it was; that placid lake, with its rich backing of wood and its islands, all looking lovely and calm, and happy beneath the silver moon. One boat was near; but shaded by the overhanging trees, they could not discern which. Elliott called on Alford.

The boat came rapidly towards them, out from the deep shade into the clear moonshine. It contained the party of Mr. de Roos. "You have been most anxiously expected, I assure you; though we looked for you from the land, not from the water," said that gentleman; his eyes sparkling with pleasure. "Let me assist you!" as he drew his boat alongside.

"Excuse me; I have promised to join Alford's party."

"But his boat is full, and he is not here. You really must honour me, and not refuse my every request;" and he spoke with that bland, yet assured tone, that often wins a disputed point from a wavering mind.

But Helen's mind did not waver.

"I never break a promise, Mr. de Roos, and leave this boat for none but Alford's. Mr. Throgmorton," addressing the other rower, "Will you be kind enough to row towards Lord Alford, and tell him I am waiting."

That gentleman did as he was requested; and, as the boat moved off, De Roos stood for a moment motionless and disconcerted, then, bending to his fellow rower, he seized his oar, and the larger boat again neared the smaller one. "But by your command, Miss St. Maur," said Elliott. "I yield to none! I can use an oar without pain."

"Row gently towards Alford's boat then, which is approaching to the right."

The oars were speedily arranged; but before they could be used the other boat was close beside them.

"At least, if you will not enter my boat, you must allow me to enter your's, and I will take you to Alford. We Oxford men allow that no others can use their oars skilfully:" and he prepared to enter her boat.

"Mr. Elliott will be kind enough to take me to Alford," she replied still more coldly than before. "Row on, Mr. Throgmorton, if you please; and at a sign from her, Elliott's oars were in the lake, though the short distance between the boats prevented a very vigorous use of them.

But Mr. de Roos was not a person to be easily foiled.

"I really cannot answer it to my conscience to leave you to the charge of an unpractised oarsman," and he showed a determination to step from one boat into the other; but a second stroke of Elliott's oars prevented the possibility of such an achievement.

The eyes of De Roos flashed fire; and, for the first time since Helen had known him, she saw his regular beauty and fascinating expression deformed by passion.—A step could

not succeed—a spring might—though full of danger to many; but when was passion careful for itself or others? Heedless of any thing but his own wild will, the spring was made, to the great danger and amid the screams of the ladies of his party. The space was greater than he had imagined, and instead of alighting by Helen's side as he had intended, he merely touched the edge of the boat, which was instantly upset by the shock, amid the renewed screams of all near.

Scarcely was Helen aware she was in danger ere Elliott's arm was round her and his lip speaking of safety, whilst at the same moment Bran seized her gown on the other side. She did not scream, but the exertions and events of the day, with her terror at the late scene, deprived her of the power of exertion; and though not quite senseless, she was motionless in Elliott's arms, who continued to support her whilst he called on one of the boats to approach, for no landing-place was near.

"Yield her to me!" said De Roos, in the low but deep tone of suppressed passion.

"Yield her to you! Never but with life! There is enough of ill on your head already."

"Baseborn beggar! do you dare to rival me? Yield her at once, or I take her by force."

"Endanger not her safety by the attempt. Back!" he continued in a more commanding tone, as De Roos seemed inclined to fulfil his threat. "This to me, who saved your life on this very element! Back, back! Your very look is pollution! Touch her with but one finger, and the world knows you as you are!"

De Roos ground his teeth, and seemed doubtful how to act, whilst Elliott swam with his burden towards the coming boat.

A little presence of mind would have saved much danger and confusion; but that had been wanting. What with the screams and entreaties of the ladies in the boat from which De Roos had sprung, and the consequent alarm and confusion among the gentlemen, with the best intentions in the world the boat had retreated instead of advancing, whilst Robert, who had heard the screams, and, guided by love, guessed Helen was in danger, instead of rowing as speedily as possible to the spot, had delayed succour, and endangered more by jumping into the lake. Alford alone retained his self-possession, and quieting his party and using great exertions, his boat reached the spot before De Roos had made a second at-



tempt. Full as was the boat, it required some coolness and prudence to place the almost passive Helen in it without danger to any: this was however safely accomplished, principally through the exertions of Alford and Elliott.

"Now row to shore as speedily as you can," said the latter.

"We can take you in."

"No! that would only bring delay and danger."

"Leave him not!" said Helen faintly, raising her hand as if to assist him in.

He pressed the hand, whispered a few words, and then leaving the stern of the boat to which he had been clinging, he again bade Alford speed.

He had been such an admirable swimmer from his boyhood, that, with the aid of Bran, who seemed to comprehend all, and drew him on by the flap of his coat, he was following the swift course of the boat with almost equal speed, when he saw de Roos at a little distance, supporting himself, to all appearance, with some difficulty.

"Is any thing the matter?" he asked.

"I was hurt in striking against the boat," replied the other faintly, pride and passion giving way before the fear of death.

Without a comment Elliott swam towards him, and left him not till he had placed him in his own boat; then again did he speed towards the shore, and after brief breathing time, pursue the party who were conveying Helen, now quite insensible, to the house.

"I go for a medical man!" he said to Alford, and hurrying on, sprang on a horse yielded to him by a gaping groom, and Doctor Musters arrived in a marvellously short space of time.

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## CHAPTER VII.

—She offered life for life!  
But they who lauded, neither knew nor guess'd  
That her own life was so bound up in his,  
That, had he died, she too had felt no more.

THE various inquiries, explanations, and exclamations, made the breakfast of the next morning almost as great a scene of confusion as had been exhibited the night before.

All denied that they had suffered from the accident, and all, despite the Doctor's prohibition, chose to appear. The gentlemen concerned had remained at the house by the Doctor's orders, and from their anxiety for Helen; and it was curious to remark the different impressions made on them by the events of the night before.

Alford was in high spirits, indulging in gay and fanciful versions of the affair, to the pleasure of those who were not concerned, and the occasional annoyance of those who were.

Mr. Euston seemed rather moody, half pleased, half not; delighted to have sufficient cause for showing ill-humour to De Roos; vexed that he had not saved his cousin himself; and glad, since that had not been, that the deed had been done by so unlikely a rival, and one whom, as a decided foe to De Roos, he looked upon rather in the light of a friend of his own. In such a mixed mood, his conduct was rather contradictory; but its chief aim seemed to be to make Helen angry with De Roos. That gentleman himself stood aloof from all others, only occasionally glancing towards them, and looking as disconsolate as his worst enemies or best friends could desire. He had ventured a timid inquiry, with downcast eyes, after Helen's health, when she first entered the room; but had not spoken since.

Elliott's feelings were those most to be envied. True he was not lively; nay, spoke even less than usual, and his wig had not been improved by the wetting: nor did he take his station by Helen's side, though, as her preserver, he might have claimed it without fear of challenge. He did not even seek to gain her attention, or meet her looks; but then there was about him that calm deep look of happiness—the enthusiast's dream of bliss—, no deceiver can hope to mock. Not feeling its inward beauty, they overdo its outward show. He had not even asked after her when she entered; but then nurse Smith had "contraried the Doctor," as she said, by choosing to nurse both, and she had passed often from one room to the other, and once with a bouquet in her hand.

Helen was as polite and attentive to her guests as ever; but she was languid, seldom looked up, and her attention to the present scene, and those around, appeared rather the effect of a strong effort than of inclination; and bright blushes flashed, and faded with far more than their usual change, leaving her cheek at times with almost the marble hue of death.

"I do not even now quite comprehend how all this happened," remarked Mrs. Hargrave.

"Then I will tell you," said Alford; "but it is a great secret, and you must not repeat it. The fact is, three gentlemen and a lady—we won't give names, that is not charitable—were so fatigued with their exertions, that they determined to indulge themselves with some strong waters; but finding them more potent than they had imagined, but for our assistance they might have paid dear for their intemperance."

"Nonsense!"

"You do not like that account! Well, then, you shall have it in poetry; ay, in the very sublime strains by which nurse cherished my gravity and wisdom:

'Ding, dong, bell! Pussy's in the well;  
Who put her in? Little Johnny Green.  
Who pulled her out? Great Johnny Stout!"

"This is too bad!" cried some, whilst others laughed outright.

"Come, Alford!" said Helen, "we have had quite enough of your true versions: so do pray talk of something else, or I shall endure all the horrors of drowning over again in imagination. I will explain it to my aunt another time."

"A very few words will do that," remarked her cousin, in a fierce tone. "Mr. de Roos chose to endanger the safety of many, by trying to leap into a boat, where the lady had already peremptorily refused the honour of his company. Had death ensued, any reasonable jury would have brought it in murder."

"You allow your regard for me to carry you too far," interposed our heroine hastily, alarmed for the effect of such a speech on one possessed, as she had lately learnt, of passions as strong, if not as uncontrolled, as his own. "Mr. de Roos could have no intention to injure any."

She turned on her cousin a deprecating look as she spoke, then glanced towards De Roos, expecting to see the furious look of the night before. What was her surprise on seeing distress and grief, but no anger?

There was a flush upon his cheek, but it seemed the flush of shame; at least, so said his downcast eyes and his look of penitence. After a moment's hesitation he advanced towards the others, still not venturing to look up.

"I cannot presume to thank you, Miss St. Maur, for judging my mad folly of last night so kindly: I can only say it is like yourself. I did not, I could not, intend to injure any; but, with this exception, no words can too strongly blame my

conduct; no words can express my regret. I dare not ask you to forgive, or forget; and as I feel my presence cannot be pleasing, I will depart immediately, trusting you will retain as charitable a judgment of me as possible. To you, Mr. Euston, I may say, that your words were strong, very strong, and under other circumstances I should have resented them; but on the present occasion I pass them over, for you cannot say harsher things than I think."

He bowed round as he concluded, and turned to leave the room.

"No! no! do not go!" cried several voices. "It was nothing but an accident."

"I dare not shelter myself under that plea," he said, with the same deep melancholy tone and penitent look with which he had spoken before.

Helen looked at her cousin. For many reasons she wished the handsome things that ought to be said, to be said by him. He understood her, and touched almost as much as the rest of the company by the deep sorrow and frank acknowledgment of error, as well as pleased that she should refer the matter to him, he stepped forward, and frankly extended his hand to De Roos.

"If you were rash, you have redeemed the error by its acknowledgment, and you must forget what I said in a pet; though I made it out little short of a hanging matter. You must not go; I am sure Helen will insist on your staying. Come, cousin! you must pronounce forgiveness on this recreant knight, and lay your commands upon him."

The culprit stood before her, scarcely venturing to raise his eyes to hers.

"May I indeed venture to hope, that Miss St. Maur will not allow my conduct of last night to leave an unfavourable impression on her mind?"

She felt, or fancied, that though he scarcely looked he was seeking to read her thoughts.

"Believe me, I have not the slightest wish to remember your conduct of last night, Mr. De Roos; and as my cousin says, I cannot permit you to leave Hurlestone at present."

Though her manner was perfectly polite, and she had answered almost in his own words, there was a coolness in her tone that satisfied Robert, amazed Alford, and displeased others; but the gentleman himself seemed to consider it all he had asked, and more than he deserved. He even appeared too much overpowered by her kindness to speak; but only

bowed his thanks, and then turned to Elliott, as if determined to win favour from all.

"I owe you much too, Elliott, for your assistance, and as I endangered you as well as Miss St. Maur, must likewise entreat you will remember nothing that passed last night to my prejudice;" and he held out his hand.

Elliott barely touched the hand presented, and saying in a cold tone, "you owe me no thanks; and rest assured that nothing that past last night can alter my opinion of your worth," turned away, and took a seat.

Those who remarked this coldness, increased in their kindness towards the penitent. The offers of seats were so numerous, he might have chosen any he pleased; and, if cramming could have made him happy, he might have been the most blest of mortals; but the penitent, though most gracefully grateful for all this kindness, was not to be elated, or won from his distress. Every look, every word, every movement, was exactly what it ought to have been. In short, never was penitence more deeply felt, or better performed.

"Heigh-ho!" said Alford, when breakfast, which had been no hasty meal, was finished, "what shall we do with ourselves? You are very delightful this morning, Helen! Suppose you ask us all to dinner, just to eat up the scraps, and save the housekeeper from despair? An impromptu banquet now!"

All laughed at the impudent coolness of the proposition.

"I am to be a cipher it seems in all these affairs," said Helen laughing; "but I know it is in vain to resist; so, ladies and gentlemen, permit me to request the honour of your company to eat up the scraps, and save the housekeeper from despair. That is it, Alford, is it not?"

Some accepted, some declined; among the former were De Roos and Elliott; and some inquirers were afterwards added.

"But what is to become of all you gentlemen, till dinner-time?" asked Helen. "I cannot have you do nothing but lounge about and yawn."

"We will go to Feldon, and look at that carriage horse for you," said Alford, "as you are resolved to be quit of us."

"A very good idea; and if all of you critics allow the horse to possess one good point, I must certainly have him."

"Elliott and myself must solicit permission to remain and assist you to entertain the ladies," said De Roos in an imploring tone; "our horses are not here."

"That must not be; we should all weary of playing the agreeable, and be dull in the evening. My stable can supply you. I leave it to you, Robert, to see these gentlemen properly mounted."

"Depend on me," replied her cousin, whose jealousy made him dislike that De Roos should ride one of her horses. "I will mount one of your steeds, and De Roos shall ride my brown."

"And I will mount another," said Alford, "and Elliott shall have my singular grey, as Helen calls it, and says I bought to be conspicuous."

"Very well; so let it be then!" and as they kissed their hands to the ladies, Helen saw it was so.

"If you are not too tired," said Caroline Mahon, "suppose we go to Hurlestone Hill; the view is so fine, and the air so clear."

"Yes, the air is fine, and may cure my head-ache. The pony-carriage and donkeys shall take us to the foot."

Helen, Miss Mahon, Miss Jones, who joined them, and some other young ladies, were soon on the top of Hurlestone Hill, seeing and admiring, as polite guests should do.

"Where does that road lead to?" inquired one.

"To the brink of an old quarry," answered Helen; "and there is another on the other side of that field. I ordered a fence at the end, for it is dangerous. Let us walk and see if it has been put up."

"What is that?" cried Miss Jones.

"Good heavens! a horse without a rider!" said another.

A low place in the hedge gave them a better view of the horse, and showed his late rider hanging in the stirrup.

"A grey horse! Who can it be?" said Miss Jones, as the animal rushed at full speed along the road that led to the quarry's brink.

Some of the ladies screamed, and the startled horse endeavoured to increase his speed. Helen had not uttered one word; her eyes had been fixed on the horse. As he passed the gap, a look of intense agony came over her features, and her hands were clasped together; then, starting forward with the wild speed of a frightened fawn, she rushed towards the road. With a light bound she cleared a gate, and stood directly in the road down which the horse was coming, not more than fifty yards from the fatal brink. On came the animal, still dragging his late rider. A faint half-stifled scream escaped her, but she swerved not—moved not; the

fear of death was hushed within her. As the animal came close, she seized the bridle.

"Stand!" she cried in a wild deep tone of mixed command and fear; then, stooping down, she released the foot from the stirrup. It was the work of a moment. The horse started from her grasp, and rushed wildly past her. There was a scramble, as if an endeavour to recover a footing, a heavy fall, and then groans of agony.

When the rest of the party had scrambled over the gate, they looked some moments on the scene before them, ere they advanced; and in truth it was a strange and interesting scene.

Helen was kneeling on the ground, tears streaming down her pale cheeks; one hand pressed upon her heart, as if to stay the wildness of its beating, the other clasped in the pressure of the rescued rider, who, resting and half raised on one elbow, was now pressing it to his lips, and now, apparently, for they were too far off to hear, and could only judge from his manner, pouring forth the most ardent expressions of gratitude.

The rescued rider was De Roos.

The young ladies looked at each other significantly, and then again at the interesting pair, as Miss Jones termed them; but to hold back longer would be an idle scruple, for three horsemen were seen dashing down the road from the further end, and it would be rather a kindness than not, to moderate the gratitude of the preserved and the agitation of the preserver, before their arrival.

"Dear Helen!" said Miss Mahon, passing her arm round her, "do not allow yourself to be so agitated. I trust neither you nor he are hurt;" and then she whispered in a very low tone, "the gentlemen are coming near."

Helen started at these words; and it might almost seem as if she had been perfectly unconscious of what had been passing around her for the last few minutes.

She looked down at the hand held by De Roos—their eyes met—she trembled violently. As the gentlemen approached, he again raised it to his lips; she snatched it away—gave a hurried glance at the approaching party, whilst the deep rich blood flushed cheek and brow for a moment; then, twining her arms round Caroline's neck, she hid her face on her shoulder, saying faintly, "Save me! hide me!"

What had that look of De Roos expressed?

Miss Mahon could not decide to her own satisfaction. It

could hardly have been dictated by one feeling alone. She should have said it spoke consciousness of power, and a stern determination to use it, with something beyond she could not well understand. But she must have misread the look. One thing she did know—she hoped never to have such a look bent on her.

The horsemen, who were now quite close, were Elliott, Alford, and Mr. Dalton. The first and foremost sprang from his horse in a moment.

"Are you hurt, Miss St. Maur?" he inquired in a tone of the deepest agitation. "Did the horse injure you?"

She neither looked up nor gave an answer, but only trembled the more.

"You are not hurt, I trust," said De Roos in the tenderest manner, passing, as he spoke, his arm round her waist, as if to support her, but so lightly that she felt not the touch—knew not the arm was there—though it appeared otherwise to the spectators.

"Speak to me, I implore you! Say you are not hurt! I should never forgive myself if I had caused you ill—you, to whom I am indebted for life, and more than life! Years devoted to you can never repay the debt. Speak to me one word, best and loveliest; only say you are not hurt!" and he hung over her, listening for her answer with all the eagerness of an ardent, and all the assurance of a favoured lover.

"No! no!" she said hastily, and, as it seemed, impatiently.

"Then will this day indeed be the happiest of my life!"

"What is all this?" asked Alford pettishly, whilst Elliott, with a death-like cheek and quivering lip gazed on De Roos with a wild and searching look. De Roos shrank not from the look, but met it with one so full of assured and complete triumph, that the gazer turned away, and leant against his horse.

"You ask what this is?" said De Roos, to Alford's question, "What should it be? but that Miss St. Maur is the noblest, as well as the most lovely of created beings. It is to her I am indebted for my life. Miss St. Maur risked her own to save mine—her arm stayed the horse in his wild career—her hand withdrew my foot from the stirrup—her kindness bade me live. Can I be too grateful or too happy? Who but Miss St. Maur would have so nobly dared?" and he again bent over her with the deepest interest.



"Humph!" said Mr. Dalton, with emphasis and displeasure. "She is no wiser than her neighbours, I see."

Alford said nothing, but he looked enough. The tramp of other horses was now heard.

"Send them away! take me home!" said Helen to Caroline, in a voice of almost passionate entreaty.

"I will, dear Helen; but pray be calm. Miss St. Maur," she said aloud, "has had so much to agitate her for the last two days, that this fresh fright has quite unnerved her; but stand aside, and leave her to my care, and she will soon recover. The horses are so near, no wonder she is still alarmed. Will some one order the pony carriage here from the foot of the hill."

"Her wishes are law," said De Roos, in a tender but respectful manner, withdrawing his arm. "Stand back, gentlemen! Move your horse, Elliott; it is close to Miss St. Maur.—Did not you hear her wishes?"

Elliott gave one look towards our heroine, the bitter agony of which passed unnoticed by all but Mr. Dalton, turned a proud and contemptuous glance on De Roos, and mounting his horse, galloped away to order the carriage. Seated on the bank, with her arms still round Caroline's neck, Helen did not speak; the only effort of which she was capable being to stay her tears, and repress the sobs which would otherwise have burst forth. She had indeed had much to agitate her for the last few days—more than many dreamt of, and nothing but her habit of self control would have enabled her to wear the appearance of outward calm. Feelings had been awakened, which, with a cowardice unusual to her, she had shrunk from examining. There had been waking and sleeping dreams too—strange wild fancies—and thoughts which would admit of no dispute to their rule. The placid calm of her bosom had been ruffled; the peaceful lake had been disturbed, and the rapid widening of the circles had been alarming; and this fresh shock had mastered her firmness.

Alford and Dalton were out of spirits; De Roos looked confirmed and conscious happiness, standing with arms folded, and eyes bent on our heroine; the rest of the gentlemen looked significantly, or whispered among themselves, and the young ladies thought it all very interesting and touching. The carriage soon came, and Mr. Elliott with it; but he stood aloof, and offered no assistance. The carriage was a double one, and Helen, faint and ill as she was, in-

sisted on occupying with Caroline the seat behind, and on being driven by Alford.

De Roos assented, with an air which conveyed an idea of his devotion even to her lightest caprice, as a slight smile seemed to intimate he thought this; but he assisted her into the carriage, and mounting Alford's horse, rode by her side, paying, during the drive and on her entering the house, all the delicate but decided attentions of an accepted lover; no longer indulging in expressions of happiness, but throwing, as it were, a veil over his own delight, to spare her feelings. Whenever he approached, many remarked a burning blush, that lingered a moment, then faded away. All this was natural.

There could be little doubt that De Roos owed his life to her, for the quarry was deep, and the poor horse a shocking spectacle. As it was, he had escaped with only a few bruises, which he declared he was too thankful and too happy to feel.

Helen was too ill to appear at dinner, and only desired to be left quite quiet, and she would try to come down in the evening. One question, and only one she asked:

"Where is Robert?"

"An express called him away to his uncle, who is dangerously ill."

An expression of thankfulness at his absence escaped her, and then she sunk on the bed on which they had laid her.

Mr. Mahon had left Hurlestone the morning of the fête, on indispensable business, or his kindly intentioned meddling might have marred or mended some of the late occurrences.

As may be supposed, the accident was fully discussed. Some had remarked one thing, some another, and almost all came to the same conclusion, expressed or imagined, that De Roos was a favoured lover.

It was late in the evening before Caroline entered Helen's room, and she found her waiting for her, but looking very ill.

"Do let me send for good Dr. Musters."

"No, dear Caroline; I am much better now, and shall be quite well to-morrow. I ought to go down."

"Not if you do not like; your alarm is sufficient excuse."

"I ought to go down; but how shall I meet him?" she murmured in an under tone; then recovering herself, she asked, "Are all the party here?"

"Yes."

She was silent a moment; then, taking Caroline's hand, and looking steadfastly at her:—"Tell me truly, what do they say of what has passed?"

"A great many pretty things! They say you acted most nobly and heroically."

"Do not jest, Caroline. I must know the truth, the whole truth. Do they attribute my act to any thing more than common humanity? You turn away; I must have a true answer."

"They do then, since I must speak."

"To what?" and Helen gasped for breath.

"In plain speech, to love!" said her friend, turning away not to increase her distress. Our heroine shook in every limb, yet she pursued her questions.

"Love for whom?"

"For whom? dear Helen! For whom should it be but Mr. De Roos."

Helen sank on the couch, and covered her face with her hands.

"Dear, dear Helen! why so distressed? Mr. De Roos has birth, and rank, and talents; and is admired by all. None can say it is an unequal match, or that you have 'unwooded been won.'"

To Caroline's surprise, this speech seemed but little consoling, nay, there appeared something in it that jarred; for her friend started, and made an impatient movement, and then spoke in what sounded in Caroline's ear a bitter tone.

"So the world says, then, that Mr. De Roos would be a fitting match, and that the heiress of Hurlestone must wed with rank, and birth, and talent, and one admired by all!"

"Is she ambitious?" thought Caroline.

"The envious might cavil, and say his father was a poor Lord, and that you might look higher; but you have none to control you."

"And, pray, has Mr. De Roos announced this to the company?" she questioned haughtily.

"Not in words. How could you suspect him of such an indelicacy?"

"But he looks, and intimates—"

"He looks certainly the happy of mortals, and has all a lover's changeful moods, starts and abstractions."

"He dare not!" said Helen, abruptly and indignantly, whilst the crimson blood rushed to her cheek.

"This is unlike you, Helen. How could any have such

cause for happiness, and entirely conceal it? Besides, the endeavour would be useless. We all saw too much. Nay, dear, I did not mean to wound you, but when you risked your life for him, and then knelt by his side in tears, leaving him to kiss your hand at his pleasure, it is unjust to blame him for what people think."

"Did I do all this? Shame on me for such weakness! But I have not been myself lately, and knew not what I did. I should have risked as much for a stranger."

Caroline smiled incredulously; and Helen, with another impatient movement, turned away.

"Suppose you descend to your boudoir, Helen, and only admit one or two?"

"And whom would you send me first?"

"One who would reconcile you to yourself, and win you to own that for which you need not blush, Mr. De Roos himself."

"You are no"—began her friend abruptly, then paused as suddenly. Soon after she rose, took Caroline's arm, and said, in a decided tone, "I shall go to the drawing-room."

"As you please! I really do not understand you."

"That is not strange, for I do not understand myself."

Many crowded round her with kind inquiries as she entered the room, and De Roos, instantly deserting the distant window at which he had been sentimentalising, hastened to approach her.

"You had better have stayed in your own room," said her aunt, evidently in ill humour. "You look one moment like a ghost, and the next consuming with fever: at any rate, do go to that quiet corner, and do not let these noisy people crowd round you."

"Well, aunt, you shall see how obedient I am," and she walked towards a distant sofa.

De Roos arranged the pillows and the lights, and brought a screen, all in the most lover-like manner; yet at the same time, with nothing sufficiently obtrusive to afford the slightest opportunity for reproof. It was the manner of one who could live upon a smile, and who, as yet, scarcely dared to hope, or believe in his own happiness; it was an outward homage of which the proudest might have been proud.

"I am sorry to have given you so much trouble," said Helen in a cold tone, seeing he still lingered near her. "Pray join the rest of the party. I have promised obedience to my aunt."

"Trouble! what a word! when I owe you so much."

"You over-rate your obligation, Mr. De Roos; I should have done the same for any."

He bowed in a manner meant to say to others, he would appear to believe any thing to please her. All who had heard smiled as incredulously as Caroline had done before; whilst, as he passed her to join the others, he whispered: "Would you have done the same for any?"

The look, or the words, destroyed her calmness; burning blushes covered cheek, neck, and brow, she half rose, then sank down again, and shaded her face with the screen.

When Helen, after some time, ventured a timid glance around, there appeared something in what she saw to interest, and another and another look was ventured; yet to other eyes there was nothing extraordinary. Some were playing cards, some admiring prints, some at the piano; Mr. Dalton was looking the churl, but that was nothing uncommon; Mr. De Roos was looking elegantly sentimental, that was natural; Alford was dull and cross, that certainly was not usual, but Helen was too distant to remark it; Elliott was too deeply absorbed in a book, which completely concealed his face, so absorbed indeed that he had not even looked-up on her entrance; and the rest of the company were too much in character to be worthy of remark.

"I challenge you to a game of chess, Elliott," said Mr. Dalton, laying his hand on his shoulder.

The person addressed started, stared, stammered out something about having had tea; and finding that was a wrong answer, complained of a head-ache; but Mr. Dalton would take no denial.

"It will be better than study for your head. Study!" he repeated contemptuously, glancing at the book, "your last hour's deep attention has been bestowed on the Cook's Oracle. What fools the young men of the present day are! and read backwards too!" he added in an under tone, "Ha!" and he still looked steadfastly at him for a moment. "Humph, what fools young men are!" he continued, as the other turned away. "Well, get the board, and play your best."

Before many moves were made, Mr. Dalton lost all patience; nothing very remarkable. "You would drive Philidor mad. Why you are going to take your own knight, man! but no wonder, it is impossible to play amid such a clatter. Here, come along!" and taking up the table, he put it down again close to our heroine. "One might as well play

chess in Babel as out yonder; but we shall not disturb you, so lie still and be quiet;" and too intent on his game to think of any thing else, he placed himself and table so as to bar her moving, and insisted on Elliott's seating himself fronting her. "Now, man, leave your own knight in peace, and see what you can do."

The game proceeded for some time with no further interruption than an occasional "psha" from Mr. Dalton; and an assertion that his adversary played so badly he should have no honour in a victory; but after a while, when Elliott was debating a move, a reply of Alford's reached Mr. Dalton's ears.

"The accident brings no discredit on De Roos's horsemanship. He had just dismounted to change steeds with Elliott, for the purpose of settling a bet with Throgmorton about which horse could walk the fastest, when a kite, flown by a boy in the next field, frightened the horse as his foot was in the stirrup, and he could do no more, as he said, than hold on 'his hat.'"

"Changed horses!" muttered Mr. Dalton. "Humph!" then turning to Helen, without the slightest consideration for time, place, or circumstance, things never thought of by him when seeking to develop a mystery, he asked abruptly, "Were you aware they had changed horses?" So sudden and unexpected was the question, that, before she had time to consider what inference might be drawn, her natural frankness made her answer:

"No."

"Humph!" cried Mr. Dalton, in a triumphant tone, "then I was right. But why do you let the puppy presume then? I tell you honesty is the best policy."

Elliott had half started from his seat as her hasty "No" met his ear. The movement attracted her attention, she looked up—their eyes met—no words were needed—hers were instantly withdrawn, and the screen again shaded her face. Mr. Dalton's remark produced no answer:

"Young folks are great fools now-a-days!" he muttered, resuming his game. "What have you been at, man, whilst I was looking away? Both your bishops walk the white, and your king has crossed the board, and got next to my castle."

"I beg your pardon, I believe I moved the table just now."

"I believe something else was moved," muttered Mr. Dalton, as the impossibility of extricating his game from its confusion, gave him time to remark the agitation of his antago-

nist. "I was as great a fool as the rest of them, to expect you to play to-night. There, take away the table!"

"Your aunt hopes you will not sit up to fatigue yourself," said De Roos, approaching.

"I shall follow my aunt's advice, and retire:" and taking Mr. Dalton's arm, she walked towards the others. "Admire my goodness, aunt!"

'To each, to all a fair good night;'

and remember my retiring is not to break up the party."

De Roos in his parting wishes maintained the character he had assumed since the accident; but the lady's answers were cold, and many accused her of coquetry. But there were three who judged more correctly.

## CHAPTER VIII.

My roots are earthed; and I, a desolate branch,  
Left scattered in the highway of the world;  
Trod under foot, that might have been a column  
Mainly supporting our demolished house.

MASSINGER.

One moment gazed—as if to gaze no more,  
Felt that for him earth held but her alone,  
Kiss'd her cold forehead—turned—is Conrad gone?  
"And is he gone?" on sudden solitude  
How oft that fearful question will intrude!  
"Twas but an instant past and here he stood!  
And now—"without the portal's porch she rush'd,  
And then at length her tears in freedom gush'd;  
Big—bright—and fast, unknown to her they fell;  
But still her lips refused to send—"Farewell!"  
For ip that word—that fatal word—howe'er  
We promise—hope—believe—there breathes despair.

BYRON.

We breakfasted yesterday at Hurlestone; we will breakfast to-day at Colville. Not that we mean to describe the shape of the cups and ewers, the quantify and quality of the eatables, or any such mean and material matters; indeed the meal is nearly concluded before we introduce our readers into

the apartment; we shall, therefore, content ourselves with saying, that every thing accorded well with the acknowledged taste and refinement of the elegant De Roos, who is sitting in an easy chair, occasionally sipping his last cup of tea, and occasionally, but very rarely, addressing a remark to his opposite and only companion Elliott, who, on his part, shows no inclination to keep up a regular conversation.

"By the bye, Elliott, though I suppose it is a matter of indifference to you, I have been over to Hurlestone this morning, and the fair heiress suffers no inconvenience from her heroism of yesterday."

"It must have been some powerful motive that could induce you to get up so early; particularly as you could not hope to see her."

"Some powerful motive! Why, my dear fellow, can you really be so dull as not to see how matters stand? I was afraid I had shown too much last night. There are some motives that will urge and excuse any thing;" and he exhibited a slight confusion.

"I see how matters stand as clearly as you can desire; but the broad assertion, that some motives will excuse any thing, is one to which a conscientious man would feel the necessity of putting strong limits."

He met the quick and piercing look of De Roos with a steady calmness which told little more than self-possession, and it might be a little contempt. The conversation was not resumed. A servant entered with the letter bag.

"Here, Elliott, is the newspaper, and you can see who is in and who is out, which of course decides the point as to who is right and who is wrong. I should not wonder if I turned my thoughts to politics now: every settled man should know something about them. Oh! and here is a letter for you, I see," and he handed it to him.

Its first perusal appeared to give pleasure, and then the reader seemed absorbed in thoughts sometimes pleasant and sometimes otherwise. Whether he fancied himself watched, or whether he really felt an interest in politics, we will not say: but after a while he took up the paper and held it before him.

"I have at last got news that will please you, Elliott," said De Roos, as if in great delight.

"Indeed!" replied Elliott, throwing down the paper, and starting as from a reverie. "Is Mr. Stanton's claim allowed, then?"

"No, no! my dear fellow; none but yourself ever dream-



ed of such a thing. We always knew that could not be; but my father feared you would run away from us, if we told you so, being by no means deficient in pride. No! but my father writes me word, that, with great difficulty and interest, he has at length obtained a cadetship, and begs you will join him in town immediately, to make the necessary preparations. I know you fancy I am not your friend, but I shall rejoice to hear of your being a rajah, or even a begum; for I know your mind indulges in no common aspirations."

"This is folly," replied his companion, to whom the idea of the cadetship, rajahship, or begumship, brought neither pleasure nor merriment. "Had I been consulted, Lord Fitzallan's trouble might have been spared; or your own penetration should have told you that I would receive nothing at your hands but what I might claim as right."

"Surely this is ungracious! I have heard you express a wish to carve out your own fortune: and whatever opinion you may hold of me, my father has always sought your good."

"We will hope, in charity, he did, when he lured me to the gaming table, and gave your knowledge or imagination room to declare me a professed gambler, and participator in some discreditable broil."

"You amaze me! I do not understand."

"If I read your looks rightly you can guess; but it matters not. Tell your father, if he meant me well, I thank him, but can take nothing at his hands; if he meant me ill, that I forgive him. To you I owe no thanks, for your own heart will say I have received no courtesy without a view. Within an hour I shall have left your house for ever. Good morning!"

For an instant De Roos looked thunder-struck; then his part was taken, and before the other could reach the door, he sprung forward, and stayed his departure, speaking in a kind tone: "Come, come, Elliott! you must not leave me thus. Listen to me."

"I have already stayed too long, for you know I am not the minion you have called me."

"I have called you! What further accusation? But you are determined to misconstrue every kindness. The cadetship must not be rejected without a thought. My father will require no gratitude, and you may still hate me as much as ever."

There was a frankness, almost a kindness, in this proposition, that, had the young men known less of each other,

might have succeeded; but Elliott's opinions, once formed on what he thought sufficient grounds, were immovable.

"It is in vain," he said coldly. "Let me pass!"

"At least tell us of your future plans, and we may serve you yet."

"Why play the hypocrite to me? Had you become the noblest and the best, you could not love me, knowing what I know. Have done with the mockery, then. If I feared, as I despise you, I would not say if I passed to the right hand or to the left; but, as it is I will tell you. Mr. Stanton's paper shall be placed in other hands; and if mortal means can win the knowledge, I will learn with whom I can claim kindred: till then I leave not England."

Indignant at the pretended kindness, these words were uttered with some warmth; and the heightened colour and quivering lip of De Roos showed him not many removes from a passion.

"Of course you can place the paper where you please; the result must be the same. But it seems something inconsistent with your proud spirit to force yourself on relations who have thrown you off. How are the mighty fallen! who would carve a path to wealth and fame."

Elliott's indignation rose high at this unfeeling sneer.

"I force myself on none; but I will be known to the world and to myself as what I am, and not endure the bye-word you have given me, of 'nameless minion.'"

"And what if you prove yourself the beggared descendant of heroes? Would you play knight errant? or become court dependant, and ruffle it on a pension?"

"I would tread the steps of my noble ancestors, and our paths would scarcely cross."

De Roos bit his lip, till the blood sprang beneath the pressure; then, after a short pause, he continued his taunting sneers:

"What! marry an heiress, and owe all to her love and favour! Sublime self-denial!"

Elliott started, changed colour, and for a moment looked on the ground, whilst the other almost shouted at his triumph.

"Ha! have I read you? Well, this is true nobility, and 'All for Love,' indeed!" Then checking himself, he continued more calmly, "But how will you seek this knowledge? Will you advertise for the next of kin?"

"Be silent!" interrupted Elliott in a commanding tone; "and thank my forbearance that you still hold place among

the honourable. If any act of yours could flatter, it would be your daring to use these taunts to me, when one word of mine could sink you to the dust. Yet you judge rightly; I reveal nothing for revenge. But beware! if I had proof of half only of what I suspect, the world should see you as you are. Enough! I have a clue, and shall pursue it."

"A clue!" and the other started. With difficulty had he restrained his passion from venting itself in speech or acts during Elliott's warning, even at the time his heart owned the truth, and half trembled at his own temerity; but he had restrained himself, though his cheek grew pale with suppressed rage, his lips became livid, and his hands clenched. These signs of fury were dismissed, and he again spoke with comparative calmness.

"You have a clue! That is strange! I thought all inquiries had proved useless?"

"Others might not have the same deep interest in unravelling the mystery."

Here a strange equivocal expression passed over the features of De Roos.

"Stand back!" continued Elliott angrily, "or I will force a passage."

"If I have prevented your departure, it has been in kindness: for your own sake, leave the mystery unravelled."

"What mean you? and whence this sudden calmness?"

"Go! go! in happy ignorance!" replied De Roos with an appearance of sympathy, leaving him a free passage. "Seek no further!"

Elliott looked at him as the wretched would look into the future, but he quailed not, blenched not. A melancholy misgiving came across him. Why should there be mystery where there was no shame? And yet his mother!—his own high feelings!—it could not be! Shame on him for the doubt! and he spoke in a determined tone that admitted of no denial.

"Seek further I will, whether my knowledge be for good or evil. If you know aught, speak instantly; but let it be truth, for I will sift it even to the shadow of a thought."

"Ask me not, in kindness! I bid you ask no more!"

"In kindness! When felt the tiger pity? Speak out! you could know no higher triumph than to crush me!"

"Be it so, then!" exclaimed De Roos, yielding to his fury, and glaring fearfully on his questioner. "Let the misery rest on your own head! Down with your own high hopes! down with your splendid dreams! Crawl on the earth, the reptile

that you are! To speak decorously of what is not decorous," and his lips were writhed into a mocking sneer; "Your mother was no better than she should be!—your father was too wise to make her a wife!—and you are—shall I say what you are?"

"Villain! 'tis false!"

"'Tis true! I can bring proof."

Elliott's bitter agony must have moved any but De Roos. He tottered and would have fallen but for the wall; his tall frame trembled in every limb; all tinge of colour left his cheeks and lips; his hands hung down by his side; his eyes glared wildly, but without seeing; and the cold dew stood on his forehead. It is possible at that moment even De Roos felt pity, certainly his look of triumph was gone, and he offered him a glass of water.

"No! no!" said Elliott, in a hollow tone, putting it away; "nothing from you but the truth. Nor shall you have cause to triumph in my weakness."

He covered his face with his hands, and was silent for some time. De Roos sat opposite, and watched him narrowly; but the face was hid, and only the trembling limbs and convulsive heaving of the chest told the fearful agony of that noble heart. These ceased, the hands were removed, and advancing a few steps, and confronting De Roos, he spoke in a steady but hollow tone, so stern as to forbid further delay; whilst to look upon him you might have deemed him from the tomb, and that no tint of life should again tinge that cheek, no smile wreath that lip. "Show me the proof! and for your own sake, let it be cleared up to-day."

De Roos rose, unlocked a desk, and handed him a packet, saying as he did so, "I trust to your honour to return it." Elliott took the paper with a steady hand, for his heart was nerved to bear; but before he opened it he asked,

"Who was my mother?"

"Cecil Elliott."

"Who my father?"

"Grahame De Roos, late Lord of Fitzallan."

Elliott started and the cousins glared fiercely at each other for some moments.

"This will require double proof!"

"It shall have treble."

He opened the packet: the first paper that met his view was a letter addressed to Cecil Elliott alone, as if the writer knew not what to call her, and signed "Fitzallan." In it his Lordship plainly told the lady she was not his wife; that a

dependant had personated the clergyman, and that her child had no right to any name but hers. He then proceeded to assure her of his continued affection; to express his regret that indispensable business still delayed his return; to ask her forgiveness for the deception; to bid her keep up her spirits, and look for the happiness of herself and child in his unfading attachment. Every line proved, man had been the deceiver, woman the deceived.

"Cold blooded villain!" burst from the lips of the reader, ere he remembered the selfish deluder had been his father. "My mother was spotless!" and the son spoke in mingled pity and triumph.

"Her child may say so; but the world is a harsh judge."

"Fiend! do you dare?" then checking himself he opened the second paper, and read as follows:

"TO LORD FITZALLAN.

"Grahame, I will not upbraid you. I cannot, for my heart is too full to speak. True, I was an orphan, a poor dependant, but my fame was unsullied, my heart at peace. What am I now? The finger of Scorn may point! the tongue of Malice may say,—she is a mother, and no wife! But Grahame, I am your wife in the eye of heaven, if not of man. I was not thrust in your way, you sought me out; when others chided, you soothed; when others frowned, you smiled; when my heart was well nigh breaking with its agony, you won it back to life and hope. You offered a happy home; you promised the love of a heart you had taught me to believe devoted to me alone. Did I seek this? Did I not bid you take a more fitting bride? one with rank, and wealth, and powerful friends? Every eye brightened at your approach, every lip uttered your praise, and how should I mistrust you? Wretched and simple as I was, you dared not breathe one doubtful word; and your reasons for a private union might have deceived one skilful in deception. You have made me a guilty thing, yet bid me linger and expect your presence; and then you tell me 'that you love me still.' Love! you never knew the meaning of the word; but I would not upbraid you, not for my own wrongs at least, though you have blighted every earthly hope. It is your hand which strikes the blow, but a higher Power permits, and I would bow. Yes, Grahame, I loved you more than mortal should be loved,

and dare not murmur that my earthly idol has been shown but dust. But my child ! my poor child ! what has he done, that his fair young brow should bear the brand of shame, even from his birth ? I forgive you all my wrongs, all the agony of the last few days, all my future years of shame and misery ; nay, I could love you still : but when I look upon my child, doomed by your treachery to shame, the mother's heart could almost hate. Why did you not help to crush me in my orphan state ? Why did you not tell me this before our child was born, and he had never seen a cruel world ? This, this would have been mercy : but now there is a tie to life, even in the shame and misery of this poor babe. If I should sink beneath the stroke, whom has he in the world to love him ? You talk of our meeting ; we meet no more on earth ; but on a dying bed you have writhed the heart that clung to you for life ; you have branded two with infamy, who should have been dearer than life ; and yet, Grahame, with all this, I love you still,—not with such love that should tempt me to linger at your side a shamed and shameless thing ; but with such love as seeks to ensure our meeting in another state. The world may commend you still ; heed not its commendations ; the breaking heart of your wife, the future misery of your child, your guilt in the sight of heaven, will rise in judgment against you. Think of this ere too late ! Seek me not, it is all I ask ; spare me, Grahame, and hear the truth. I dare not meet you again. I would have gone before ; but I have been ill, very ill, delirious they say ; and even now my head is throbbing wildly, and burning tears blister the paper. If my words seem harsh, forgive me, and doubt not that your child shall learn to love you. Farewell ! that every blessing may be yours, is the prayer of the wronged, but forgiving,

CECIL ELLIOTT."

What were, what must have been Elliott's feelings on the perusal of such a letter ? written by a mother, whose memory lingered in his heart as the sun's last ray to him who dies at dawn ; but a cold unfriendly eye was on him, and without comment, he opened the remaining paper. It bore the same signature and address, but the writing, instead of the wild energy in expression, and abrupt and decisive strokes in form, gave evident signs of a waning strength and a declining mind ; though ever and anon, a something of the former soul was visible.

## "TO LORD FITZALLAN.

"More than three years since, I wrote that we must meet no more but on a dying bed. The hour of our meeting is nigh; come to me, for the sake of our child, though its wretched mother is no longer loved. I have tried to live for his sake; but the body can no longer bear the spirit's strife, and I have none to leave my child to but to you. Grahame, it is a sacred trust. The past may be forgiven; that it has been is my prayer; but for the future, wo! wo to you, Grahame, if your child should rise against you at the Judgment Day. Your name has never reached me in my solitude, and I know not if you grieved or joyed in my absence. I know not if time and thought, and Heaven's grace have changed your heart: but listen to the warning voice of the dying. The sins of the past, and the future, will rest on your head, if our child tread the paths of the wicked. Come! and take him from my hands! come and receive one last embrace! I would die in your arms. Come, Grahame, come! for life is waning fast, and the spirit lingers but for you. In death, as in life, your's and your's only,  
CECIL ELLIOTT."

"Thank Heaven, for such a mother!" burst from his lips; but he looked not round, and saw not de Roos's smile of derision. It was many minutes ere he again advanced to his cousin; and, when he did, the same stern manner, the same proud resolve to bear, was visible, softened—a very little softened—by the perusal of these letters, which confirming as they did his shame, yet brought some relief, as proving his mother worthy of his love.

"Have you further proof, Mr. De Roos?" he asked, in the same stern tone as before. "How is it certain I am the child mentioned?"

"I think you do not doubt it; but I have proofs for every thing. Lend me that locket round your neck."

Elliott drew it from his bosom, but still held the chain—the last relic of a mother now doubly dear!—he could ill brook to see it in his hands. De Roos touched a secret spring, and gave to view the features of the late Lord Fitzallan. In the inside was traced "Grahame De Roos, to his own Cecil Elliott."

The son looked at it a moment, whilst a sterner expression came over his face.

"Who was present at the ceremony?"

De Roos hesitated a moment, and said in a kinder tone :  
"My valet was present, but why increase your pain, by the presence of a menial?"

"I have not shrunk yet; let him appear."

"As you please!" replied the other with a return of his mockery: "you shall hear every thing. I will call him."

"No; ring for him."

"What, do you dare suspect?" he asked in wrath, then added with a sneer: "but losers must be humoured."

There was nothing remarkable in the man's appearance, except that he never willingly met a look; but he had been uniformly civil and attentive to Elliott. As he entered the room, he was surprised at the looks of his summoner, and then with downcast eyes awaited his orders.

"Gilbert!" said De Roos, in rather an emphatical tone: "you will make Mr. Elliott understand his mother had no right to the name of Fitzallan."

"Gilbert, you will tell the truth!" said Elliott, sternly. "If I but imagine a falsehood, the Courts of my country shall decide: now answer, and be brief. Was Cecil Elliott the wife of the late Lord Fitzallan?"

The man hesitated, seemed distressed, and looked towards De Roos.

"Speak! cannot you?" said that gentleman, "and tell her son she was not: since he will learn unpleasant truths."

The man seemed to shrink at the tone, or the look which accompanied it, and Elliott again spoke sternly.

"No interruption! or I question the man in private."

De Roos shrugged his shoulders, indulged in a sneering laugh, and made no reply; but sat with his eyes fixed on Gilbert.

"Again, I ask you, was Cecil Elliott the wife of Lord Fitzallan?" and he watched the man steadily and earnestly.

"The service was read; but a man was hired to act as a clergyman, who was not one," answered the man in a perfectly steady voice, though without looking up.

It seemed as if Elliott had hitherto indulged some hope, which this answer destroyed, for he was silent a few moments, and his lips became more livid.

"Were you present at th ceremony?"

"Yes, sir."

"By whom was the man hired?"

"By me, sir."

"Villian! What doom can you expect for betraying in-



nocence? The curse of a broken heart will be upon you, the orphan and her child will plead against you."

The man trembled, turned pale, and looked at De Roos.

"If you expect me to be silent, Elliott, you must control your passion, or you will frighten the poor man to death: he is trembling at your mother's ghost already. And remember who contrived the plan."

"Who?"

"Your own father, sir. I did what he told me!"

Elliott shuddered, looked down, then resumed the examination more calmly.

"You hired a man, who was not a clergyman, and saw him perform the ceremony?"

"My lord desired me to do so, sir; and I was present."

"Is the man living or dead?"

"Dead, sir."

"Was there a child?"

"Yourself, sir!"

Elliott seemed to shrink at this answer, but continued.

"Was there no other witness?"

"Yes, sir, Janet Douglas; but she is dead."

"The name is Scotch. Did my mother live there?"

"Yes," replied De Roos, with a sneer; "but my uncle crossed the border ere the mock ceremony was performed."

"Is this true, Gilbert?"

"It is, sir."

"How know you I am Cecil Elliott's child?"

"I had you in my arms soon after you were born, and know you by a peculiar mark on your left shoulder, and I placed you with Mr. Stanton by my lord's orders, after your mother's death, sir."

"Did you see my mother before her death?"

"No, sir; she was dead before my lord arrived?"

"Did he grieve much?"

"A great deal at first, sir; but my lord was never sad long, and besides, he went abroad after as ambassador, and did not return for a long time."

"Why was I placed with Mr. Stanton?"

"My lord said he heard he was a clever man, and it was better you should be brought up in quiet."

"Did Lord Fitzallan make no provision for me before his death?"

"My Lord destroyed a will a few days before his death, sir; and never made another."

"Had he made any provision for me in that will?"

"He told me he had, sir, but did not say how much."

"You are certain he made no will afterwards."

"Certain, sir; he told me so himself."

"Did he speak of me on his death-bed?"

"Yes, sir; but he was delirious at last, and raved about you and your mother, and prayed you to forgive him; and then, at last, he said he had seen your mother, and she had forgiven him."

"Do you know anything of a bond for three thousand pounds, to Mr. Stanton?"

"No, sir."

"Why did you never tell me this before?"

"My lord and Mr. De Roos begged I never would, sir, as it would grieve you."

Elliott was silent: he had asked these hurried questions, and every answer served to confirm the story of his shame. Of what use was further inquiry? Even he could not doubt, at any rate, he felt he could bear no more with calmness.

"Let me have the name of the man who performed the ceremony, with place and date, ready within an hour. If your tale be true, I must bear my misery as I can; if false, look to it! You may go."

The man bowed, and withdrew.

"Are there any more letters or proofs, Mr. De Roos?"

"None! I should think these more than sufficient."

Elliott took no notice of the sneer.

"You have heard my words to Gilbert, and understand, if I can overturn your proofs, I will. There need be no show of courtesy between us, and I shall rid you of my presence shortly."

"Stay!" said De Roos, "examine as you please; but when satisfied, let my father have the pleasure of assisting his nephew. The cadetship offers an honourable way to independence."

This was said with so much kindness, that Elliott was surprised, and fixed a penetrating look on the proposer. His own suspicions, or a something in the scrutiny neutralized the kindness.

"I am sorry if I wrong you in my thought, that you would have me leave the kingdom; but it matters not. I can receive nothing at your hands. These letters shall be returned, and without waiting a reply, he retired to his own room, double locking the door.

Two hours passed, and he had not left his chamber. Gilbert was alarmed, and showed much anxiety. He approached the door on tip-toe—no sound reached his ear—he ventured to look through the key-hole. Elliott was seated opposite, his head resting on his hand, with the Holy Book open before him. The man retired as silently as he had advanced; there was no cause longer for fear, whatever there might be for sympathy.

His bell rang soon after, but Gilbert was particularly wanted by his master, and another answered the summons.

"Let my horse be saddled, and brought to the door directly! Desire some one to take my trunks to the village, to meet the mail; and bid Gilbert bring me the paper I ordered."

"Yes, sir."

"I wonder what can be the matter!" said the man to his fellow-servants. "Mr. Elliott looks like a ghost that is let walk, and his voice sounds grave-like."

The sun was shining in all his mid-day splendour. Helen fancied the house oppressive, and, leaving it, established herself in a bower shaded and bright with many a clinging plant. A book and her work lay beside her, but she made little use of either, for thought was too busy to allow of occupation. One while she seemed dreaming of the future; one while moralizing on the past. Now she plucked a flower beside her, and then she looked out on the stately trees around, her beautiful face showing, as in a mirror of the mind, each changing of her mood. There were wood and water, hill and dale, with glimpses of her childhood's home; a paradise of beauty round about her. The woods still rich in their summer verdure, with but here and there a fading lime, in its autumn beauty, like the first touch of sorrow on a warm young heart, with much of brightness, even in its melancholy. She stood at the entrance of her favourite bower, looking forth over all these beauties; her white garments fluttering in the breeze, and the bright curls playing over her fair and changing cheek.

A horseman appeared on a neighbouring hill, his dark figure seen distinctly against the clear blue sky behind. He paused a moment for breathing or for scrutiny, and then dashed on towards the maiden's bower. She stepped back and took up the book, but her hands trembled, and her mind knew not the meaning of the words over which her eye wandered. On came the horseman, unheeding fence or bar; then springing to the ground, entered the bower with a

stately, though hurried step. The intruder did not speak, and Helen did not look; but she knew it was Elliott, and she felt his gaze was on her.

"Miss St. Maur," he said at length, in a deep hollow tone, "I am come to say farewell for ever!" She started, turned deadly pale, and, alarmed at his words and tone, looked up, forgetting, as she looked, every thing but the agony depicted on his countenance.

"Good Heavens! Mr. Elliott, you are ill! very ill! What can have happened?" and she held out one hand, whilst she clung to the trellice with the other.

There was that in her manner, that but a few hours since would have made certainty brighter than hope; that very manner now showed him but the more plainly what a wretch he was.

He took her hand, and pressed it between his, but made no answer. The marble touch of those hands alarmed her still more.

"Speak to me! Tell me what has been!" Then, a fearful thought coming across her, she added—"Mr. De Roos! You have not hurt him?"

"Do you love him?" inquired Elliott, with almost fierce earnestness.

"Oh! no! no! but I would not that you ——" and she stopped abruptly.

"Fear not! no blood is on my hands, and he is below my anger."

"Thank Heaven! but why do you look thus; you have been thrown! you suffer!" she said, as he gave her no answer. "Oh, stay not here! Come to the house! and let me send for some one instantly."

"This to me! such gentle kindness! but you do not know the wretch before you. I am not ill—not in body; and if the heart is wrung, who cares for one blighted by shame!"

"Blighted by shame! What mean you? No! no! this cannot be; you do not know what you are saying!" and she looked earnestly into his face.

"Oh, but for this! I might ——." He stopped and turned away. "You must not look upon me thus, or I shall shame my manhood; you must look coldly on me, as the world will do. Yes, the finger of scorn will point at me, and I must bear it!"

The memory of his mother's wrongs unnerved him, and the flowery wreaths bent and crashed beneath his weight.

Helen's tears fell fast, though she knew not what he meant.

"Is this kind? Is this just? Mr. Elliott, you have friends who prize you, who owe you much, and yet you despise their regard, and will not trust them with your sorrows!"

"Despise!" and he turned full upon her. "Those tears, too! and they fall for me!" and, for a moment, all the love, a knowledge of whose power came with its hopelessness, blazed fully forth.

"If I might—," he began, as if to himself. Helen drew back, trembling and blushing; he paused, and then continued—"No! no! this must not be! innocence must never join with shame. I must not seek your love, but I will not forfeit your esteem." The expression of his features changed, and love gave place to honour. He took both her hands in his, and bent over her. "I have alarmed you, Miss St. Maur—forgive me! and bless you for those tears! their memory will lighten my load of misery. I may not linger, for each moment would but heighten the agony of parting, and I might be tempted beyond the power of resistance. I need not tell you what was my presumption. As we stood together by that dark stream, with the deep wood around us, and the bright stars above, my spirit owned a spell no mortal thing can burst; a tie that death alone can break. You had been the star of my childhood; but what are the feelings of the boy, to the intensity and depth of the passion of man?"

"That hour! but why linger on its memory? It was the first, last blissful hour my lonely life has known; but the splendid meteor has set in darkness, leaving the memory of its brightness to fling its mockery over the future. I knew myself poor and unknown; but I might win riches and honour, and you were not like the cold world. The visions of the future gilded the ruggedness of the present. I might have known such things could never be; but who ever loved and doubted? Loved too, with the deep passion of a heart thrown back upon itself; deeper from the very presumption of its love—a principle of life—a love never wasted on another. Yesternight, and never, but with life, would I have resigned my lofty hopes; to-day I ask not even for remembrance. No! let me pass from your memory, and be as one who has never been; though every tear is worth a world, I would not cause you one: poverty you might have remembered, shame you must forget! But yesternight I

dreamt of honour and renown, to-day I think but of shame and obscurity. I must be unnoticed and unknown—I cannot brook the questioning of whom I am. The mark of guilt is on my brow—the shadow of my parents' shame is over me. I had a father, and I must not bear his name!—I had a mother, with all of woman's purity, deceived—deceived—and yet I cannot clear her fame! I am the cousin of De Roos without the power to repel his scorn—his uncle's child, but not his heir. To linger here is but to link you with a name of guilt. Forgive my presumption, despise me not for my daring. May hope be less bright than reality; the present fairer than the past. May every blessing be upon you! Farewell! Farewell!"

He pressed the hands he held to his lips, gave one long look, as if to image every feature on his heart, then released his grasp, rushed from the bower, sprang on his horse, and put him to his utmost speed. So wild—so strange—had been the whole scene—so sudden his departure—that Helen stood for some minutes unconscious of his absence. The deep hollow sound of the horse's tramp aroused her; she sprang to the entrance of the bower, every thing was forgotten but his agony, and the desire to relieve it. "He is gone!" She uttered a faint cry to recall him, but he heard it not; he had felt the danger of delay. A faintness came over her, but it weakened not the intensity of suffering; she stood with clasped hands, watching the motions of the receding horseman; he reached the top of the hill on which she had first seen him; then, and not till then, did he turn for a last look. She fancied he waved his hand, her handkerchief fluttered in the air; he lingered a moment, and then descended the hill on the other side.

Had they met for the last time?

## CHAPTER IX.

"I've caught a tartar!  
Bring her here then.  
I can't!  
Why not?  
Because she won't come."

---

"Oh, blame her not! When Zephyrs wake,  
The aspen's trembling leaves must shake;  
When beams the sun through April's shower,  
It needs must bloom the violet flower;  
And love, howe'er the maiden strive,  
Must with reviving hope revive."

SCOTT.

"I WAS just coming to call upon you," said Mrs. Jones to Mrs. Mahon.

"Pray come in then! I have just finished my walk; and there are the Johnsons, I see."

There were the Johnsons, and the whole party were soon seated in Mrs. Mahon's drawing-room, and the real state of the weather agreed on, after due differences and coincidences of opinion had been propounded.

Mrs. Jones began to get fidgetty.

"A shocking thing this illness of poor Miss St. Maur's! Don't you think so? Poor thing! and I know Dr. Musters has a very bad opinion of her; indeed, I really think her friends ought to interfere; for poor dear Doctor Jones used to say, neither calomel nor bark would cure love."

"La, Mrs. Jones! what do you mean by love?" inquired Mrs. Johnson, "I thought it was a cold she had caught the night she fell into the water! And I am sure I can't think how it can be love, when we all know she might have any body she liked."

"That is going rather too far," said her son, craning up, "she is rather a fine girl, certainly, and has a large fortune—more even than the ten thousand a-year people speak of—but then she may not suit every man's taste. I should like a wife with a little more spirit, and more style, and dash; and I think she demeaned herself by paying so much attention to that Elliott."

"It might seem strange to those who do not understand how things are; but to those that do, it is very natural;" and Mrs. Jones looked,

"Big with the fate of Cato and of Rome."

"What can you mean?" cried two or three at once.

"La, don't you know? Well, I thought every one must have known by this time. I went away the very day it happened, and only came back yesterday, so I made sure every body knew she was dying for love of Mr. De Roos, and fear of Mr. Elliott."

"You must be mistaken, Mrs. Jones, Caroline has been with Miss St. Maur ever since her illness," remarked Mrs. Mahon, who having set her mind on De Roos as a son-in-law, never quietly allowed him to be awarded to another.

"Miss St. Maur may not choose to tell, but I know what I am saying," said Mrs. Jones.

"Pray tell us?" and the lady, wishing nothing better, began—

"You all know how Miss St. Maur nearly killed herself to save Mr. De Roos, and when they all came up, she was kneeling by him, and he kissing her hands, over and over again. Well! she would come down in the evening, only to see him, and all thought it a settled thing, and he as much as told his servants it was, and he went over the next morning very early, and in at a side door, and it was all settled; for I was out walking, and saw her come to the door to wish him good-bye, and it seemed a very tender leave-taking indeed. Well! when Mr. De Roos got home, he told Mr. Elliott, who is a furious man when in a passion, and he said he would have her himself, and swore a terrible oath that if he married Miss St. Maur, he would shoot her through the heart; and he ordered his horse directly, and rode off like a madman to Hurlestone, and there he found the young lady sitting in an arbour. So he made her an offer, and when she would not have him, because it comes out he is the natural son of a butcher, he flew into a great passion, and took hold of her hands, and vowed if she married Mr. De Roos he would kill them both; and then he would have put her on his horse and carried her away, but she screamed; and so he let her go, and rode away, making her take an oath, down on her knees, she would not tell any one; and soon after, she was found half dead with fright, lying on the grass, and you know how ill she has been ever since."



The whole party looked as amazed, and uttered as many exclamations, as the relator could have desired.

"We never heard Mr. Elliott had seen her before he went away. Are you sure?"

"I saw it myself; there is a window in one of my garrets that fronts that way, and I look out of it sometimes for the view, and saw what I have told you myself, and I am sure I pity the poor thing, and think some one should interfere."

"So I think, indeed," said Mr. Mahon, who had entered the room with some others in time to hear the last part of the conversation, "I will set about directly. You are quite sure this is all true?"

"To be sure it is! Do you think I would say any thing that was not? Pray don't bring my name in question, though; but I will answer for it, as I am a living woman, that Miss St. Maur is dying for love of Mr. De Roos, only Mr. Elliott won't let her have him."

"Then your life is forfeited, Mrs. Jones, for your tale is a falsehood from beginning to end."

All started and turned to see from whence and from whom this energetic denial had proceeded; and, to the dismay of all, there stood Miss St. Maur herself, just emerged from behind a large screen. This was her first visit since her illness, and she had been reclining on a sofa, whilst Caroline went to the nursery. Surprise, sorrow, and the languor of illness had kept her silent for the first few minutes. The tale, distant as it was from the truth, had brought the past before her in all its bitterness; but whatever the pain, she felt Elliott must be cleared, and that instantly; and the depth of one feeling gave her the mastery over others. Had she been a ghost, some of the party could not have been more alarmed, nor was the terror of Mrs. Jones without a cause: for indignation had so far conquered illness, that the flashing of her dark eye, rendered brighter by the burning spot upon her cheek, and the stateliness of her whole demeanour, were awful to an inventor and retailer of scandal. Before they had recovered from their surprise at her presence, she continued her address to Mrs. Jones.

"Not contented with relating mischievous tales that are doubtful, you invent falsehoods sufficient to make you an outcast from society; and you may even fear more serious consequences, should you persist in such a course. Mr. Elliott could not have quarrelled with Mr. De Roos for the reason you assert, since Mr. De Roos could not have uttered

such a falsehood, as to say any engagement subsisted between us. That Mr. Elliott should call to take leave before his departure, was no more than common politeness demanded, but the rest of your statement is false; and even Mrs. Jones might blush at pretending to overhear a conversation at the distance of half a mile! Mr. Elliott did not make an offer, and did not believe me engaged to Mr. De Roos; consequently, could not have been refused, or enforce the oath as you stated; and his conduct has ever been that of a man of high honour and noble feeling. I did no more in stopping the horse for Mr. De Roos than I should have done for another; and if he thinks otherwise, the blame must rest with his own blindness and vanity; and if he had a tender leave-taking with any at the side-door of Hurlestone, it must have been with one of the servants, for I never saw him. As he must have known its untruth, I cannot believe that Mr. De Roos could have been so deficient in delicacy and honour, as to have given his servants reason to believe what you report."

"Mr. De Roos is here to answer for himself, to any charge it may please Miss St. Maur to bring against his honour and delicacy," said that gentleman, advancing before her, and bowing with an appearance of the same deep deference he had shown when last they met; but there was that in his eye that the lady ill brooked, and her colour went and came.

Of all people in the world he was the last she wished before her at such a moment; he saw this, and his anticipation of triumph rose the higher. Mrs. Jones did not know whether to consider his presence as a diversion in her favour, or a combination against her; but could she have read Helen's feelings, she would have considered herself amply avenged.

Our heroine was silent; for indignant as she was, she was half afraid to show it. He saw her hesitation and availed himself of it.

"Do not, I entreat, condemn me on idle report," he began, in a soft and even tender tone, though his eye was still upon her. "Believe me not capable of a want of honour or delicacy towards you, even in the slightest point; or that I could have warranted the idle speech of others. There are some subjects too holy for the tongue to meddle with."

No one could doubt, from his manner and equivocal speech, that he stood there a favoured lover, bending with all due grace and devotion to a wayward and capricious mistress. She saw the impression such conduct had made, and must make, and her lip quivered with anger; but the nervousness

of indisposition had weakened her powers, and she was silent. He saw his advantage : one bold step might insure him victory, for others had entered the room, all evidently judging alike ; and she might be too far entangled in the appearance of an engagement, to know how to draw back.

"The fatigue of your drive has been too much for you ; let me hand you to your carriage, which is in waiting ?" and he offered his arm, with a half timid, half assured manner, well calculated to strengthen the impression he desired.

With another his success had been certain ; but, with all his penetration, he knew not Helen St. Maur. With a flashing eye, that shrank not even from his insolent and warning look, she drew back haughtily.

"Mr. De Roos, you presume—"

To advance on an enemy in such a mood was dangerous, but a skilful retreat might serve as well. He kept his eye steadily upon her, whilst to the view of all others he was submission itself.

"Pardon me, if I have presumed too far. Your will shall ever be my law ; and in deference to it, I resign the pleasure of handing you to your carriage ;" and he bowed in a deprecating manner.

Every thing the deceiver said or did, heightened the impression he desired ; and Helen's indignation rose in proportion, placing her on the very verge of imprudence. A quarrel would be as dangerous as submission ; lovers' quarrels are proverbial ? she confined herself, therefore to a haughty tone.

"You pretend deference to my will in words, Mr. De Roos, yet, with the art of a practised diplomatist, defeat it in acts. I would have you show, in manner as in speech—in outward seeming as in inward thought—that if you have indulged presumption heretofore, you now renounce it."

Her equal in penetration, his great and practised coolness gave him the advantage, and he showed no other change than a deeper submission, whilst his eye glanced a sterner threatening. "Mould me as you will. On what have I too much presumed ? What charge do you bring against me ?"

This question required a plainer answer than she was inclined to give, and she was silent. He saw, and pursued his advantage. "Let me entreat you to drop this subject at present ; you look pale ; another time I will clear myself from every charge."

"No, sir," she replied with increased indignation ; "as the insult is continued, it must be answered now."

"Insult, Miss St. Maur! is it possible you can so misconstrue my words and actions?" and he looked all distressed and astonished innocence.

"I neither misconstrue your words nor your actions; and since you persist in confirming, by your manner, the report to which it is believed yourself gave birth, but one way remains for me to silence it. Your name is erased from my list of visitors."

This was a desperate proceeding, and one to which nothing but her high indignation at his insolent look, and the full conviction of his purpose, could have urged her. She knew he could relate what none present guessed, and no sooner were the words uttered, than she half repented of her daring; but brook his insolence she would not. He seemed thunder-struck, but he never resigned a battle whilst a man could be rallied, and no submission was too great to keep up the acquaintance; besides, a moment's consideration must show her this was a strong measure, not warranted by the knowledge possessed by others: and by intimating this, he might induce her to retract it, and give him a triumph.

"I cannot say how you surprise and distress me!" and he looked all anguish. "I might appeal to all whether my submission merits such a sentence; but rather would I refer the matter to your own noble nature. Only tell me of what I have been accused? and if I cannot clear myself, then will I own the sentence just. One fault I own, I have ventured my whole of happiness on a — perhaps, too daring hope; but as my crime is shared by half the county, why am I only to bear the penalty?"

She felt his toils were closing round her, but she had nothing left but to dare the worst, or leave him victor: and her indignation bore her through, though she felt as he could desire the awkwardness of this public discussion."

"Half the county would not thank you for the charge of endeavouring to make, what you know to have been an act of common humanity, appear a flattering mark of favour."

"Have I alone misjudged that act of common humanity?" with an emphasis laid on the last words.

"A community in error is no plea of innocence, and ignorance merits not the same blame as knowledge. Your conduct has left me no alternative!"

She would have put an end to the conversation by retiring, but this ill-suited his plans, and he detained her.

"Pardon me! but now that one charge against me has been publicly stated, you will in justice allow me to make my defence. To do that most effectually, perhaps the best

way would be to relate all that passed when you so nobly saved my life: suffering, as I was at the time I, may have been mistaken."

A look which she well understood, was fixed upon her as he paused for her answer. She trembled—her eyes sank—was her bosom's secret to be thus laid bare to the world? But the weakness was transient, every thing depended on her conduct now—if she shrank, she must be his slave—that she would not be:—and if not too much irritated, for his own sake, he might be silent, or cautious; he was not one to satiate malice whilst a hope of benefit remained. She looked at him with a steady gaze, and her voice was calm, her air more commanding.

"If you believe an account of what passed will sanction your after presumption, you are of course at liberty to relate it. The having forced me to speak thus openly before so many, has made me no lenient judge; yet your own conscience must acquit me of excessive rigour, and I am accustomed to act without referring the matter to others."

They stood for a moment fronting each other in silence. He tried the force of another look, for he knew she could read it, he even muttered a low, "Beware!" but she only drew back with a deeper flush, and a prouder look.

The contest was over: and De Roos knew it. To give a true account would bring revenge, but would condemn himself; to give a false one would place him beyond the pale of forgiveness. The chance yet remained of winning by sap, what had been lost in bold attack. Apparent generosity and submission, by flattering her vanity, might yet mine the citadel. He would have wished some looks and words recalled, but that could not be, so more art must be employed; the greater the difficulty the prouder the victory: and the lady should pay the penalty hereafter. No half measure would do.

He started, covered his face with his hands, and a modulated groan escaped him; he would have had it appear, as if some sudden grief, some abrupt agony had come upon him.

Never perhaps had a stranger scene been exhibited at a morning visit. There had been nothing common place; nothing according to ordinary rules; it had been almost as exciting and breathless in the acting, as a romance of Scott's or Cooper's in the reading, and there seemed now a chance of a tragic *dénouement*. The high-toned indignation of the lady, and the masterly submission of the gentleman, had been

most delightfully interesting; an interest heightened by the beauty and elegance of both. The spectators had turned their looks from one to the other, as either spoke, in wonder or admiration, and all thinking they understood that of which they knew nothing; but now there was to be one actress the less, and one wondering spectatress the more, for Helen stood looking with amaze, on De Roos's sudden, and to her inexplicable change of manner.

"Mr. De Roos is ill!" said some one, "see how he trembles!"

Mr. Mahon was eager in his offers of assistance, but, as if aroused to consciousness by his attentions, although declined, he uncovered his face, and gave to view features exhibiting the expression of overwhelming sorrow. Pity was almost universal, as with downcast eyes, and a low and faltering voice, he addressed our heroine:—

"I can no longer complain of the justice of my sentence, or doubt that the fervour of my hope clouded my judgment. I see now, with the deepest anguish, that, confused by my fall, and led on by my wishes, I read in your heroism a deeper interest than common humanity. This you might excuse; but what can I say for my madness in believing you capable of coquetry! If the sincerest sorrow for my presumption—if the deepest contrition for my late conduct—can win a pardon for my offence, then may I hope, from the very nobleness of your nature, that you will deign to forget the past? Could my greatest enemy but read my heart, he would deem my punishment sufficient."

He waited her answer with the humble, but earnest eagerness of one who felt his doom for good or ill was pending.

She looked at him in still greater amaze; she scrutinized lip and eye, cheek and brow, word and tone, but there was nothing to awaken doubt. The insulting look was gone. What was she to think? Could he really have misunderstood her wild exclamation of thankfulness, on finding Elliott had been in no danger? And was that look only meant to speak his triumph, on believing himself beloved? Or was he only feigning still more deeply now? Never were sorrow and contrition expressed with an appearance of better faith; if it were acting, it was the perfection of the art. She was bewildered, but this was no time to deliberate, for anxious eyes were fixed on her, eager to learn how this singular scene was to terminate; nor was there cause for deliberation. To receive his excuses with the same appearance of good faith with

which they were offered, must prove to all the fallacy of their former suspicions; besides, she could not but feel delighted at such an unexpected conclusion, and something like gratitude for his present conduct, however she might entertain a misgiving as to the purity of his motives; but even if convinced he was feigning, it would be folly to show such a conviction.

"I were a churl indeed, Mr. De Roos, not to pardon the past, after such an apology, and so public and open a declaration of your having been mistaken. I am sorry if my words conveyed too harsh a censure, and beg they may be forgotten."

All considered this an unlimited forgiveness and promise of forgetfulness; the gentleman appeared in raptures, and said and did all that was right; whilst the company looked at each other, and wondered how they could have been so mistaken.

Helen almost immediately took her departure, escorted to her carriage by De Roos and some others. He stood looking after her, revelling in the idea of having so flattered her vanity by this public homage, submission, and confession, as to have little cause to doubt his final success; yet the degradation was not forgotten: and it has been whispered, he said to himself, "I shall hold myself in debt to Mrs. De Roos, and it will be long ere I write '*L'ho pagato*.'"

"I fear you are worse, dear Helen," said Caroline, as she remarked that her friend leant back in the carriage.

"No, dear Caroline, only vexed, excited, and bewildered."

"The whole matter is incomprehensible to me, I own; may I ask ——"

"'Ask me no questions and I'll tell you no stories,' as the school-boys say. It has been predicted I should marry from curiosity; and if I were certain of disannulling the union at pleasure, I might be tempted to become Mrs. De Roos for one half hour, to learn if he feigned or not."

Caroline was in amaze—"Feign! Surely you cannot doubt Mr. De Roos?"

"Doubt! Why not? It is the height of wisdom to doubt of every thing. As nurse Smith says—'There is nothing certain but death and the taxes;' and it is the very acme of the vulgar and the commonplace, to take every thing for granted."

"I believe I am very stupid," said Caroline, in a tone of pique.

"I believe you are," replied her friend, playfully, kissing her cheek; "the truth is, if I mistrusted you I should be

more open ; but I know you are too kind and too prudent to do me harm, should you chance to stumble on a light in the dark."

"A tempting reward for goodness! Beware! for I shall henceforth look with fine eyes, and listen with fine ears!"

MRS. GOWER TO MISS ST. MAUR.

"*Vaut rien,*

"Florence.

"What favour can you expect? There have I been worrying and tormenting all the ambassadors, ordinary and extraordinary, envoys, attachés, secrétaires, &c. &c. &c. with all the post-masters and post-mistresses to boot, in and about '*la belle* Florence,' for a circuit of a hundred miles, with inquiries for a letter from you, which I vowed and protested must have been lost or mislaid. After having put the whole embassy in commotion, and decided that Metternich must be deciphering treason in its contents, the long-looked-for has arrived, bringing, as most long-looked-for's do, disappointment in its train. You have been ill, very ill, and had a relapse, and are too languid to write much, and cannot undergo the fatigue of describing your fête, as you had promised; and then you give me the report of a death that has been, a marriage that is to be, and, with the usual loves and remembrances, sign yourself mine, most affectionately. An epistle without an idea! taken from the polite letter-writer! Such a composition as one sends to a hundredth cousin, whom one designates in one heart as an ultra bore, but to whom one feels one ought to be civil, having received at her hands pigeons or partridges, pickled salmon, or potted grouse. And has Helen St. Maur dared to address such a letter to Harriet Gower? Look at me, for my whole appearance proclaims an 'enormous storm,' and you have no hope of mercy. Not one word of that epitome of elegance, the Honourable Reginald De Roos, whose character, with more daring than prudence, you determined to develope. Not one word of your *protégé* the Northern Bear, towards whom, I conclude, you showed so much favour, because, as they say in the *Noctes*, one cannot make a pet of what every one else likes. Not one word of your perils 'by flood and by fire,' and how this grateful animal proved himself as valuable a



friend as the White Bear of Hans of Iceland, by rescuing you and nurse from the too loving embraces of the fire-fiend and the water-god. Not one word of how you stayed a steed in full career and how that steed had changed riders; and how all the world chose to think one thing, whilst you knew another; and how one noble heart, even in the depth of its sudden agony, gave up the only hope that could brighten the future and disdained to ask what a moment of weakness might have granted, and after pride repented. You see we who are connected with the corps diplomatique, know every thing. Why was I to hear of none of this from you? I who have been your friend from childhood, and from whom you have professed a hundred times to keep no secrets. I will tell you two things now; and a more marvellous one later in my letter. No turning to the end for the précieux morceau, if you please! First then: 'There's a silence that speaks,' What a superb blush: it absolutely tinges my paper, even at this distance, with *couleur de rose*. Secondly: I can read your feelings in the dashes to your *l's*, and the dots to your *i's*, and they are at the present moment none of the most enviable. You are fretting and chafing because there are thoughts in your heart which were never there before, and because your will is not quite as omnipotent as of old. Bah! Did the little blushing simpleton imagine she was never to feel the doubts and anxieties *d'une certaine passion*? Submit quietly to your fate, as wiser folks have done before—Mrs. Gower for instance. Then you fancy a frown on the brows of those grim gentlemen in armour, who gloom your walls, and look with a sigh on the interminable genealogical tree, unsullied by a stain. In other words, Love and Pride are waging war *pas en amis, mais à l'outrance*. Ask your old ancestor Sir Herbert, who fought in the Crusades, and figured as a Trouvère, whether he ever heard of a knight saving a lady's life, and not being rewarded with her hand; or the damsel's being punished for her pride and cruelty. Bethink you of the Kienast,—

' He who stems a stream with sand,  
And fetters flame with flaxen band,  
Has much a harder task to prove—  
By firm resolve to conquer love.'

You may weave the ropes of sand, but they will not bind, for the spell is not upon them. You may resolve, and you may do. The world may see a smiling lip, but the heart

may be a waste. You are no changeling, and the magic spell is round you; and why is pride to make your life a wilderness? Love can only be conquered in minds like yours, by duty; and there is no duty in the case. There is none to whom the Heiress of Hurlestone owes deference; and she has wealth and birth, that assure her the highest station in society, wed she with whom she may. She neither seeks rank nor riches; worth and sense none can deny him; then why allow an unhappy birth to decide against one of the noblest beings that ever breathed? Or does she only wait for fitting excuse and opportunity to repair ill fortune? This would be more like the heroic nobleness of her character. This is rather a long homily, so in reward for your patience, you shall hear my pet piece of intelligence; but first order the *sal volatile*, and desire the maid to be in attendance. Are you prepared? Well then, Grahame Elliott is here—one of the under secretaries, or whatever they are to be called. Yes, here! under my roof, at this very moment, and as you may guess, almost as great a favourite with me, my steady husband, and riotous children, as some people think he is with some one else. How have you borne the shock? Bravely, on my word! But banish that frown. Elliott is no whiner, and I have learnt nothing from him but what I have wrung forth by sudden and searching questions, or read in a blush, a sigh, or a quivering lip. The account of a friend, who watched over him during some days of delirium, and my own almost magical penetration, have placed me "*au fond de cette affaire*." It would serve you right to leave you in wonder how he came here, or how I came to patronise him; but I am too merciful. I should not be much surprised if you knew something about him when he reached town, or had heard that Mr. Hopkins had found him out, and shown him the world in brighter colours than those in which the announcement of his birth had painted it. But pass we that. Now this Mr. Hopkins is my husband's cousin, and a great ally of mine. Hopkins! I hate the name and tried to persuade an uncle to insist on his changing it for a fortune; but, would you believe it? both uncle and nephew were obstinate, and said something very sublime about old family names, like a simple young friend of mine:—so a cousin Hopkins I am doomed to have to the end of the chapter; unless, indeed, some new peers should be wanted. I must intrigue to get ministers into a dilemma. Well! this cousin, who is the next best creature in the world to

Frederick Gower and Grahame Elliott—see what a pattern of a wife I am—had procured him this situation before, and now persuaded him to live in Florence rather than die in Greece; furthermore, he furnished him with all proper recommendations, and a letter to me as long as one from a Miss in her teens describing her first sensation, with an account of his virtues, his heroism, and his misfortunes; his knowing you, and some other matters, and imploring my royal favour. I knew him in an instant from your description. It was a perfect picture, except that the black patch is gone, and that he looks more stately and melancholy. To be sure, he does wear hideous wigs! I have been trying to persuade Gower to speak to him, but he declines: so I suppose I must do it myself, or I think I shall order one to my fancy, and take away his old one. I verily believe, like Dominie Sampson, he would never remark the change, so little does he think about personals at present. There is something in your favourite Shakspeare about “love, which makes a sloven of a man,” is there not? You know I never remember any nonsense but my own. Truly, the creature would not be so ugly, if he were not so thin and white and sad, and did not wear such villainous perruque; at least so says my little Helen, who throws her arms round his neck, and then looks up in his face, and whispers, ‘Do you love Helen?’ Why, the man blushes like a girl; and even the child is satisfied of his love for Helen, whilst I laugh behind a screen. He is not aware I know as much as I do, and how I wish you could see his face, when he speaks of you; and listen to his sighs, when he thinks no one hears him. The first is like Venice illuminated, and the second like the melancholy hush of the destroying storm. My woman’s heart is quite won over. To let you into a little secret, though, the mother’s heart was won first. Some horrid wild horses might have run over my lovely little Helen—your image, I flatter myself—if he had not carried her off. He seems to me to do nothing but save people. If all his gallant deeds were recorded in a novel now, I would wager my wisdom the critics would say it was not natural; but, fortunately for you, no needy authoress knows your tale. He is at present staying with us, but leaves us in a few days, which, perhaps, is as well, for I accuse Gower of being jealous. To be sure he denies it, and declares he likes him as well as I do; but then, you know men will deny anything. Besides, he sees nothing, but absolutely asked me ‘Why Elliot looked so miserable?’ Such

a look of scorn I bestowed on his dulness : and then, in his kindness, he introduces him to all the handsomest signoras. But never fear ! blue eyes against black for once. We had a superb scene yesterday. Some one defended a man of base birth, for winning by stratagem the lady of his love. Such a burst of indignant eloquence ! such flashing of eyes ; such curling of nostrils ; it was really awful—quite sublime ! He said—but I should spoil it all. Sufficient, the whole room was in amaze, and the defender of the stratagem absolutely aghast. ‘ What would you have him do, then ? ’ he stammered out at last. ‘ Live for her, die for her, but never seek to win her. Real love would never strive to connect its object with one on whom the breath of shame had passed.’ Helen, you are no woman if you can withstand that. Now the moral of my tale is :—Come over to me. The winter is cold and dull in your foggy England ; and I will promise you blue skies and warm hearts, with pictures and palaces, and a thousand splendid things besides. You have half promised me a visit for a long time ; so come, and let me nurse you into health. I really want you to see what a good and a happy wife I am, and to listen to a mother’s praises of her children. If you fancy my letter savours little of the wisdom of a matron, the more reason you should come and reprove me in person ; and if you think I have said serious things in a light way, it was because I knew there was serious matter enough in them without the weight of my gravity. This is a thing in which you must judge for yourself ; all I entreat is, that you will not throw away your happiness for an idle punctilio ; and that you will be as candid as of old. Though a wife and a mother, I am still a friend : and despite hints and advice, do not see why I am to give up the companions of my childhood, tell all their affairs to my husband, or bore them with nursery details.

“ Never you marry, Helen. Here is Gower scolding me for writing such a letter, which he persists in it must be full of scandal or abuse of him. How conscience doth make cowards of us all ! He declares my packet is already too large for the post ; but I have a friend at court, and know this will reach you through an official channel, should it grow to twice the size.

“ Really, my dear, I am horridly jealous ! I condescended to tell my domestic tyrant that I had pressed you to come and see me, and he absolutely insists on my saying he will meet you in Paris, and conduct you hither. There is a hus-

band for you! I will let him have his own way for a month, if I can be so self-denying.—‘I am writing to Miss St. Maur, Mr. Elliott, have you any message?’—The man turned away with such a look of agony, that I repented my mischief. He then said in a low voice, ‘No, I thank you; Miss St. Maur knows she has my warmest prayers for her happiness, and I may not ask to live in her memory.’

“You will never get well in England, I am sure. So come, come, come! So say two, and thinks one; or would if he knew, which he does not, lest he should fancy he ought to run away. With all due remembrances,

Adieu, dearest Helen,

Your own

HARRIET GOWER.

“Now for a woman’s postscript, Some one has presented Elliott with ten thousand pounds, without a clue to the donor. The dolt has not an idea! He an *attaché*, here or elsewhere! I can guess; can you? Shall I give him a hint? There is no romance like real life.”

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“The families seem deserting the county strangely,” remarked Mrs. Carleton, in her usual grand style, to some morning visitors. “I understand the Marstons go to Brighton to-morrow, because my lady fancies the sea air will restore herself and daughter; and my lord wishes to be near the Court. I am sure it is no wonder Lady Catharine should be ill; she has scarcely left the sofa for weeks, except to go to Hurlestone. If people moved about more in the house, and looked into requisite improvements, I say they would have no occasion to visit watering places. Then there is Miss St. Maur, she is going to Florence.”

“Going to Florence? Impossible!” exclaimed Mr. De Roos, with an abruptness and harshness, at variance with his usual suavity.

“Impossible or not, Mr. De Roos, I say it is so. I had it from herself yesterday.”

“I beg your pardon. I meant to express surprise, not doubt; of course you are correct. Is it on account of her health?”

“So she says; and to fulfil a promise to an old friend; but I say she has looked much better for some days.”

“No great loss in either,” remarked Miss Carleton; “we

can do very well without them;" and she glanced towards De Roos for acquiescence.

"You cannot require either," was the answer, with a look readily interpreted into a compliment.

"I doubt if Mr. De Roos approve of Miss St. Maur's visit to Florence. I should not wonder if he persuaded her to remain here," remarked some one on his departure.

"I suspect he has not as much influence as people suppose," said Mrs. Daniell. "I do not think she has been very cordial with him since that scene at the Mahons; and I know she was so indignant with Mrs. Jones, for speaking such falsehoods, that she has never admitted her since; and has planted trees, though at some distance, to shut out the view from her garret window. Besides, I know Mrs. Mahon does not credit the report, and Caroline is a great deal with her."

"Mrs. Mahon never allows any young man is going to be married: she wants them all for her own daughters. I understand the principal reason why the heiress quarrelled with Mr. De Roos, was because he had introduced, and got her to patronise, a natural son of somebody's—that Mr. Elliott; no one quite knows his story: though she chose to lay her anger on his presumption, and I think I have this from good authority, not many removes from the gentleman himself. She seems inclined to play the coquette to perfection; but, as he is always with her, I conclude he knows what he is about, and denies but faintly when rallied. I heard him recommend a successor to the rector of Hurlestone, who was reported to have died at Hastings; and when another afterwards did the same, she said she had decided on whom to bestow it. Take my word for it, she will not go to Florence unless he accompany her."

"Mr. Elliott may have been the cause of her displeasure," persisted Mrs. Daniell, "but I doubt her having quite forgiven him; for though, as you say, he is constantly with her, it is less at Hurlestone than elsewhere, and rarely by her invitation. As to the appointment to the living, time will show."

"I am sure Mr. De Roos would not be so much with Miss St. Maur, if she did not ask him," said Miss Carleton, with a toss of the head; "and he as much as told me so himself; but so great an heiress may do anything, it seems. Not that he is so much there as people say, for we see a great deal of him."

## CHAPTER X.

The Kamsin in the desert, sweeping o'er,  
And making desolate all bright before.

EVEN during Helen's illness the poor had not been forgotten, and now on the eve of her departure for a distant land, she was still more anxious that none should suffer during her absence. To prevent this, she had not only made every, requisite arrangement with her steward, as in former times, but in addition, she had begged Miss Mahon and Annie Grey to visit her schools, and some of her poor favourites occasionally. She was returning from the village, where her smiles and kindness had as ever brought content and happiness.

A slight languor alone remained to tell her of her late illness, for the spirit's strife was over and her eye was nearly as bright, and her step as buoyant as before. One little week, and she should be on her road to Florence! the thought occasioned a slight tremor, but the step was decided on, and she said she could not recede. Did she wish it? She paused on her path to look around, and then, though none were by, blushed as she looked. A shadowed stream and a wooded bank were before her: she was gazing on the spot, on which she had stood the evening of her fête, and where beneath the starry sky and gentle moon, a look, a word, had revealed the secret of the heart.

The scene was changed now, for autumn was fading into winter, and a few bright dry leaves alone lingered on some of the topmost branches. She had never trod that path since—she had said to herself she never would alone—but she might look at it across the stream, and—it might be—the time was not far distant when she might stand there again.

A stealthy step, and a deep breathing startled her from this lovely dream. She looked round, and saw a woman with a child beside her. Mother and infant both looked ill, but though plainly clad there was a something interesting and above the common order about them. The woman did not speak, but she gazed with an imploring and deprecating look, on our heroine.

"You are ill, and perhaps in sorrow!" said Helen kindly, "and look weary too. Come and sit down in this summer house, and tell me if I can help you."

"Heaven bless you, ma'am, for your kindness! they told me you never turned away from any; but it is not fitting I should sit in your presence, and I should not have troubled you, but am nearly starving, and my friends have turned me out; and he who made me a guilty thing has left me and his child to die. I have never known one hour of peace since that time, and when my poor child cries I cry too, and when he smiles, oh, then it's ten times worse! If God will not show more pity than man, I am a poor lost thing indeed."

"But God will be merciful to those who repent, and trust not to themselves," said Helen, soothingly, with tears in her eyes; "and he will raise you up a friend, even at your greatest need; but come and sit down, and tell me how to serve you: we have all need of repentance, and that mercy which none should refuse a fellow-sinner."

No one could doubt the woman's sincerity—it was evident she had suffered much, and was a true penitent, mourning for the sin still more than its consequences. At first our heroine listened to her story with no deeper interest than compassion, but late in the tale the interest was to change to agony.

She was young, not more than nineteen, had been deluded to her ruin, by one her superior in rank, and then cruelly deserted, when most requiring pity, and driven from her uncle's roof to find a shelter where she could. A poor relation had given her a home, and watched over her in the hour of danger; but she could not be a burden on this kind heart, and she wrote to her deceiver. A bitter and a cruel answer was the result, refusing assistance, and taunting her with her shame. The kind relation died, and Lucy, broken-hearted, without a friend, and half wild with grief, left the north for the south, to seek her deceiver and gain help for her child, or die at his feet. We pass over the detail of her sufferings, when the little money left her by her relation was exhausted, and hasten to the conclusion.

"I heard he was staying with Mr. De Roos, and went to ask; but he was gone far away, they told me. I thought the news would have killed me, for I was very weak, and how could I go further without money; and then perhaps for nothing. But the servants were very kind, and when Mr. De Roos heard I had come a great way to see the gentleman, he sent me out some money, and I went away into



the village; and then I was ill, and spent my money, and some one told me of your goodness, and I ventured to come; but I was ashamed to go to the house, for I never begged before; only my poor child is very ill, and indeed, ma'am! I am willing to work if I could get any."

"Do not doubt my assistance," said the sympathising Helen, her heart swelling with indignation against the wretch who had wrought the ill.

However the woman's manner might set suspicion at defiance, she never gave permanent relief without ascertaining, if in her power, the truth of the stories told her, and this habit, with some interest about the conduct of Mr. De Roos, made her ask the name of the deceiver.

"Mr. Grahame Elliott, ma'am!" said the woman, with a faltering tongue, as though the memory of the past still made her loth to proclaim his guilt.

For a moment Helen sat like a statue; cold, pale, immovable—then starting from her seat, whilst the indignant blood rushed to cheek and brow, she exclaimed:

"Impossible, woman! 'tis false!"

The poor woman looked at her in surprise and terror, so bright was the flashing of her dark eye.

"Indeed! indeed, ma'am! it is true!" she faltered out; "and I have got Mr. Elliott's letter to prove it."

Helen took it with a haughty air, still unshaken in her confidence, but as she looked at the letter, the colour again faded from her cheeks. It was one of the most cruel, taunting letters, that hand could trace, or heart could dictate. It was impossible it could be Elliott's writing! She examined every particular, and her heart died within her. It was dated a few days after she had first seen him. There was the proper post mark; the seal she had seen him use; and there was his hand-writing: his *g's*, peculiar ones. The letter fell from her hand.

"You are ill, ma'am! Shall I call some one?"

Helen roused herself—"No! no! leave me, and stay near till I call you."

The woman obeyed, and Helen was alone.

It was long ere she summoned her, and when she did, her features bore marks of the conflict that had been. Yet was she no longer the living statue the woman had left her: on the contrary, there was something fitful and changing in her look, as if hope were combating with despair, and the lofty spirit would not bend.

"Woman," she said, rather sternly, "Mr. Elliott's name stands high for honour, and his friends will not believe your statement lightly. If you have spoken truth, answer my questions clearly; if falsely, retract at once and I will still assist you."

"I have only spoken truth, ma'am, so help me Heaven! and I will answer every thing you ask," said the woman, with the wounded tone of conscious innocence.

And she did answer every question simply and clearly. Never did learned judge or clever counsel question more closely; but hope became less bright at every answer, for all strengthened and confirmed the woman's tale; and the despairing Helen was forced to admit to herself, that only two circumstances could warrant a doubt. The description of his person did not quite answer; she made him out handsome, with bright rich hair—but then she might be supposed to judge too favourably, and the illness and wig might have completely altered his appearance. Then there was the kindness of Mr. De Roos, and a relation of a servant of his had persuaded her to make this application. Could it be a plot of his? But then the woman seemed truth itself.

"Did you tell your story to Mr. De Roos, or his servants?"

"Oh no, ma'am! I never saw Mr. De Roos in my life, and only said I was in great distress, and was sure Mr. Elliott would assist me, as he knew all about me."

No one else could have failed to have been convinced; but Helen loved, and condemn without further proof, she could not and she would not. If a doubt in his favour remained, her friend's husband should clear up the matter; if no doubt remained, none beside herself should hear the tale.

She dismissed the woman with some money, promising further assistance in a day or two, on condition of silence, and then sadly and slowly sought the house, for the sun was sinking fast. A head-ache, shown by her wretched looks, satisfied her aunt as to the propriety of her keeping her room; and memory retraced the agony of the last few hours. She sat at her window long after all others were at rest, watching the shifting clouds chasing across the dusky sky, the night breeze playing on her burning brow. And where was sleep? Where are the summer friends of the poor, in the dark hour of need? Absent when needed most!

Could he be guilty?—She was not ignorant there are men in the world, who pique themselves on honour, on bravery, on generosity, and yet hold deceit to village maidens as

trivial matters. Yet surely he was not one of these? His acts had seemed based, not on man's applause, or natural benevolence, but on the higher principle of Christian love. How might she learn further? Annie Grey had spoken of him; she would question her; and she waited for the first grey streak of dawn, as mothers for a darling child's return. At length came dawning day! Helen's bell rang.

"Bid the groom saddle my horse directly, and tell my aunt, when she asks, I am trying to get rid of a head-ache, by an early ride, and not to wait breakfast."

The hoofs of Helen's horse lingered not on the road, and she and Annie were soon together and alone, and the morning's greetings past.

"Do you know any thing more of Mr. Elliott than his defence of Mr. Hopkins?" asked Helen; "for Mrs. Jones reports strange things;" and she felt she blushed at making a handle of her gossip.

"You must know much more of him than I do, you saw him so often when he was here."

"This is no answer!" said Helen, colouring still more deeply at the remark. "Come Annie, tell me truly!"

"I never saw Mr. Elliott till he came here; then why should you think I know more of him?"

Helen felt the force of this evasion, and, for a moment, came the coward thought that she would ask no more, and persuade herself to disbelief; but the next, she resolved on acting like herself.

"I think it, Annie, even by your answers now, and because I know you never willingly speak ill of any."

"And why, if you think I know any evil of him, urge me to speak?" and she pressed her hand affectionately; for though Annie had seen less than most, she suspected more. Helen turned away, and was silent for some minutes, then said in a firmer voice, "If you have ill to tell, it is the more requisite I should know it. Speak it plainly!"

"Have you considered, dear Helen? Have you strength to hear it?"

"Yes! as my friend, you must conceal nothing."

Thus pressed, Annie did conceal nothing, and Lucy Martin's story, and the villany of her deceiver, was more than confirmed. She had received a letter from an old lady in the north, a friend of her father's, detailing Lucy's story, and begging her to befriend her, should she, as her neighbours imagined, was her intention, proceed to seek her destroyer. The

old lady, who had been absent during Lucy's distress, had made every inquiry; indeed, the proofs were so strong and so clear, that even the most prejudiced could doubt no longer.

Helen spoke not, but her head sunk on her friend's shoulder, whose tears fell fast; and it was long ere word or movement gave sign of life; at length she murmured—

"I should have known this long since; this silence was unkind!"

"I knew it not myself, till I shrunk from the pain its recital would inflict."

"Then you guessed, Annie?"

"Yes, dear Helen; but he may have repented," she added, half soothingly half doubtingly.

For a moment Helen's face lit up, and then its transient lustre faded away.

"No, Annie! tempt me not to deceive myself; his letter is too recent, and too cruel; and, if he had done such a thing and repented, he could not have spoken to me as he did of his past life. He must either hold it no sin, or he must be innocent; and that you say he cannot be?" and she looked at her imploringly.

Annie turned away.

"Then there is no trust in man!"

Her friend sought not to sooth; it was no case for human soothing. The mortal blow to trust and confidence had been given; that heart could neither love or trust again. She might, as a duty, seek the happiness of others, but smiles and grateful words could impart no glow to her own chilled heart. The storm had ceased, but the thunder-bolt had fallen, and the noble tree was wrecked—up-torn. A few sickly leaves might put forth, but they would only be a mockery of the spring's rich verdure. From that hour she saw a worm in every bud—read deceit on every lip. To Annie alone was no change of manner discernible.

"Will you," she said, abruptly, "execute a task from which I shrink with dread? Will you take this money to the wretched woman, and tell her if she will leave this place to-day, and go to Thornhill, my farm in S——, I will write to the people there, and she and her child shall have every comfort. I know you will make my message sound kindly to her; and, oh! beg her to conceal his name! I cannot see her myself; if you knew the horror with which I shrink from the thought! I know she is the least guilty; but I can only look upon her as some fearful thing coming between me and hap-

piness—throwing a blight and a suspicion on all around. Tell her, dear Annie, she and her child shall never want; but do not let her seek me!"

"I do not wonder at this now, but happier times will come, dear Helen!" and she threw her arms round her neck, and kissed her pale cheek. "I will try to be as kind to her as you could be; but indeed! indeed you must not think all deceivers."

Helen rendered back the caress, but shook her head. Annie returned from her mission as soon as might be, charged with Lucy's thanks, and grateful acceptance of the offers made her, and Helen's horse having come back as ordered, she returned to Hurlestone with neither a less painful head, or a lighter heart. Her aunt met her in the hall. "Why! you look like a ghost, child! What can be the matter? I am sure you are going to have a relapse and are not at all, fit for this journey to Florence."

The old lady wished to remain with her, and to keep her near her cousin.

"I believe you are right, aunt; the journey to Florence must be given up, and I will write by to-day's post. By keeping quiet for a day or two, I may avoid a relapse." She spoke hurriedly, and passed on instantly to her dressing-room.

"Well, De Roos! Is the heiress more lovely, and less capricious?" inquired Mr. Tindal, who, with two or three other gentlemen, met him on his return from Hurlestone: "Come, tell us the truth, and put us out of our misery at once! You look as if you were really happy, but thought you ought to appear sentimental and melancholy. Let the sun burst through the fog! Is the day fixed?"

"On the contrary, she has given up her intended visit to Florence entirely," replied De Roos, choosing to misunderstand the question.

"She has!" exclaimed two or three voices.

"Then I have won my bet", said one.

"I was sure De Roos would knock up that journey."

"You attribute too much influence to me, gentlemen; her aunt says she is not strong enough to undertake the journey."

"That means not strong enough to resist your persuasions. Well! you will be a happy man, if no rival shoot you through the head? When is it to be? with all decent speed, eh?"

"Really, gentlemen, you strangely misunderstand my words," replied De Roos, with looks that confirmed the suspicion he deprecated in words.

A loud laugh was the comment, and showed the credit given to his assertions.

"Then there is one heiress out of our reach, so I suppose we must try for the other, though somewhat inferior."

"Whom do you mean?"

"Why, Miss Carleton to be sure! A great, great uncle, or thousandth cousin, or some such thing, has died, and left eighty thousand pounds to go to Miss Carleton and her brother, or the survivor; and 'my son John' was thrown by his horse Conqueror last week; and they say cannot live;' so the young lady will be worth paying attention to. I hear Mrs. Carleton's neck is a more moderate length than usual, as she does not quite know whether to look up for the fortune, or down for the fall; but I suppose it will soon be longer than ever, as she will expect to be mamma-in-law to a Viscount at least. I think I shall try my luck, though only a commoner: and remember, De Roos, should the St. Maur prove capricious at last, you are not to poach on my manor; or I should stand no chance."

A laugh was the only answer.

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MRS. GOWER TO MISS ST. MAUR.

MY DEAR HELEN,

*Florence.*

I would not willingly accuse you of caprice or coquetry, but your conduct is to me inexplicable; for, besides the sudden and unaccountable change in your purpose, there is a coldness and restraint throughout your letter I neither approve or understand. It should seem as if, from the most loving and confiding of beings, a spell had come over you, making you the most cold and mistrustful. You say 'illness, and something you cannot explain, require you to give up your visit to Florence;' and then you implore me to let the past be forgotten, and never to permit the future to bear reference to it. This may be very sublime; but to me is very annoying, and very incomprehensible. Further, you write of your journey, as if it had no connexion with another person; and, if no such person existed. Fortunately, as he never knew of your coming, he suffers enough without that. He at least is no changeling. You may think me unkind, but the truth is I am more fretted at your letter than I deem it prudent to say: the writer bears but little resemblance to my early friend. The whole world has it, that Mr. De Roos had no small share

in changing your mind, and that he will hereafter have an equal share in changing your name. I hope this is not true; but appearances warrant the conclusion. Beware how you marry a man petted by all the world! he will either turn out a coxcomb, a tyrant, or a hypocrite.

‘By gazing on himself grown blind,  
No other can he see.’

Mrs. De Roos need send me no cake, for I will neither taste it myself, nor let the children touch it. I am too angry to write more; but if you wish us to be to each other as of old, let me hear instantly; be candid, and forgive my petulance.

In love, despite your change,

HARRIET GOWER.

P. S.—I have read your letter over again, and fancy I can discern a depth of anguish in its very coldness. Forgive me, Helen. Breathe but a hint, and I will come to you. You once said I could sooth; let me do so again, if in sorrow. If De Roos have thrown his spells around you, a friend may break them. Should you wish it, do not scruple. Gower will attend me over, and Elliott look after the children in my absence. I am quite jealous, the little animals do so dote on him. Shall I come?

## CHAPTER XI.

"And fronted Marmion."—SCOTT.

"The fellow's insolence is superb."—SALATHIEL.

"My own lov'd Zayda! do we meet once more?"  
 She starts—she turns. The lightning of surprise,  
 Of sudden rapture, flashes from her eyes:—  
 But that is fleeting—it is past; and now  
 Far other meaning darkens o'er her brow;  
 Chang'd is her aspect, and her tone severe.  
 'Hence, Aben Zurrar! death surrounds thee here!"  
 'Zayda! what means that glance, unlike thine own?  
 What mean those words, and that unwonted tone?  
 I will not deem thee chang'd; but in thy face  
 It is not joy, it is not love I trace.  
 It was not thus in other days we met:  
 Hath time, hath absence taught thee to forget?  
 Oh, speak once more!—those rising doubts dispel;  
 One smile of tenderness, and all is well.  
 Not thus we met in other times!—oh, no!" HEMANS.

SUMMER and autumn had both passed, and winter ruled. It was the middle of January, and one of those clear bright frosty days, of which sometimes, as an especial favour, one has six in the season. The ground was hard, and resounded beneath the foot as if trodden by one of power and might, and the air was clear and bracing. I know not if others feel as I do: not the happy, I have little in common with them, and their very happiness partly consists in the absence of presage or comparison. The moment happiness asks why it is happiness, that moment it is falling into the "sere and yellow leaf." But I wonder if those in sadness and in sorrow feel as I do. Spring brings to mind the gay bright hopes of youth; but then experience tells how those bright hopes have faded:—and the sickened heart turns away with disgust, for it knows that it can feel such hopes no more; or if it could, what are they but lovely flowers, scarcely admired ere trodden under foot? Yes, Spring certainly is a gay deceiver.

"If the blue sky were always blue,  
 And the green earth always green,"



then the heart might yield itself to its devotion with all the abandonment of a first love : but such things are not. Well ! it is all best as it is. Were this earth a paradise, who would sigh for heaven ? And who does not love it and all its glittering things more than they should, despite its fathomless mines of wo.

Then there is Summer. And what is it but a beautiful mockery, taunting the wretched ? The flight of the painted butterfly, and the song of the wild birds, and the perfume and the beauty of the flowers, are but as bitter scorns and gibes to the sorrowful. And the calm placid evening, with its crimson glories and its gentle haze and its deepening shadows : oh, it is then that memory riots in its power, and the heart writhes in agony ! You will say an humble and a pious spirit should delight in its beauties, feel a gush of love and gratitude, and read in its splendours the promise of a brighter world. And so it should. Well ! let us try next summer, should life be spared.

And now comes Autumn ; for, having begun the seasons I suppose I must go on, or I shall be considered partial. I know nine-tenths of the world would allow me to abuse this season with impunity. It is so melancholy to look at the fading trees and the drooping flowers, and to hear the equinoctial gales whistle through the woods, sweeping the forest bare ; and then to hear those very leaves, whose whirling flight we have watched, crunch and crackle under our feet ; and the thought of the dreary winter that is coming next. Certainly autumn is very melancholy. It is melancholy, and that is why I like it. It sympathises instead of mocking. To a light grief it is saddening ; to a deep one, soothing :—as the heart in its anguish revolts at the rebuke of the flippant or stern, but bends to the tear and the tenderness of love. I do not dispute its melancholy, although I joy in its beauty. It has the loveliness of some fair being sinking into the tomb. As the light bright tints of spring change into deeper, darker hues, wither, and die, so do the hopes of youth deepen and darken, wither and fade, in our after years ; each falling leaf is a sorrow ; and the crunching sound beneath our tread is as the last sigh of departed hopes. Then the immediate prospect is cold and dreary ; and our regret for the past is increased by our anticipation of the future. Spring is the emblem of deceit ; autumn of truth, thence its melancholy. But then its gorgeous colours and splendid scenery are to the eye of the Christian, as the departing glories of the

faithful: Seeing the nothingness of the things of this world, the fading of earthly hopes brings no regret, and the thought of the future no terror. The grave may be cold, and lonely, and dark: but the day-star will arise, and an earthly winter give place to a heavenly and eternal summer.

And now for winter. But I really must hurry over winter, or I shall be thought

“The last of the prozers left prozing alone.”

Lady Morgan says the race of prozers is extinct; I hope my readers will think so. Besides, my book should draw near a conclusion, and I am beginning to be impatient to learn whether the publishers will buy it and the public read it. So now to dismiss winter as briefly as I may. I give up its happy looking fires; its cheerful evenings; its gay dance; the graceful motions of the skaters; the skimming in a car over the glassy surface of the lake; the beauty of the newly-fallen snow, clinging to bough and branch:—yes, I give up all these to reprobation, and any other delights the ingenious may discover; and I join in the direst abuse of wet, and dirt, and fog, though all very useful in their way. But then, in return, I must have these six fine frosty days, of which I spoke yielded to me. There is no dulness, no lassitude; the coldness of the air requires just so much exertion as will put the blood in circulation and dispel despair. There is no bright green to deceive, no butterfly to mock, no fading leaves to prove the certainty of sorrow. We know the next change will be brighter. It is a period of sobered anticipation, of chastened hope; not too dazzling to be realized, not too dull to be unworthy the name. It may be a silly fancy, but in such days I feel the majesty of might within me; and if my spirit ever glows with anything like the brightness of its early hours, it is then. But who cares if my spirit be brightened or saddened? None. Well, then, I will be merry.

And now for the moral of this seasonable exordium:—

“To know the best season to laugh and to sing,  
Is summer, is autumn, is winter, is spring.”

But laughing and singing are vulgar and doubtful modes of expressing happiness; let us substitute tears and smiles as something more exalted, and delicate, *et puis, reverons à nos moutons.*

It was one of these fine frosty days for which I have been pleading. There was a clear bright fire in the library at Colville Lodge, and the elegant and Honourable Réginald De Roos was lounging on a couch, studying the early career of Vivian Grey, or some other hero, when Mr. Elliott was announced. Reginald De Roos started from his seat with more haste than elegance. This announcement was rather a *mal à-propos* interruption of his golden dreams, of becoming master of Hurlestone, and taming the lofty spirit of its heiress. He might stand excused if he gave no cordial greeting to such a visitor at such a time.

"Elliott!" he repeated in surprise, as that person entered the room, "To what am I indebted for the honour of this visit? What seeks the Elliott of De Roos?" he added in a mocking tone.

"Justice!" replied his visitor sternly.

De Roos turned deadly pale, and clung to a chair for support, but recovered himself almost instantly and prepared to play the polished host.

"I do not understand you, Elliott, and did not know you were in England; but take a seat, and if my father or myself can serve you, it shall be done: though you demand our aid rather than request it. Have you found another paper of Mr. Stanton's? Bring proof, and Lord Fitzallan will pay the demand on the instant."

Elliott took no notice of the offered chair; and neither look or tone lost any of their sternness as he replied.

"You say you do not understand, though your looks contradict the assertion. But be it so. I will explain, though my simple demand of 'justice' should have told you all is discovered. I come not as Grahame Elliott, to claim the paltry sum of three thousand pounds, promised to rob me of my birth-right and perpetuate my shame; but I stand here as Grahame De Roos, Baron Fitzallan, to demand that birth-right, to deny that shame."

De Roos gasped for breath, but his was no weak mind, and he rallied again; had that mind been bent on good, he would have been a glory and a blessing.

"Since you come as an enemy, as such you must be answered. You cannot suppose my father will yield his right, without proofs stronger for, than those we hold against your claim; and we understood you had sought such proofs in vain."

"You understood correctly. My own search was vain,

but Providence has placed in my hands the means of circumventing the wicked, and clearing the innocent. I can prove what you know to be true, that the illness of an intended tool, and pity for my mother's gentleness and beauty, caused the substitution of a real clergyman, though not one of worth, for a supposed one, by George Gilbert. I can prove that my father knew this from Gilbert some days before his death, the suddenness of which alone prevented my acknowledgment; that for this reason he destroyed his will in your favour, and in his last moments owned me his rightful heir, warning you the curse of a dying man would rest on you and on your father, if you sought to wrong his child. I can guess that the bond for three thousand pounds was given to Mr. Stanton, by your father, to bribe him to silence, and to give up a letter from my father, owning the validity of the marriage, and saying he should shortly summon me to appear as his heir, though the wrong intended to my mother made him dread the interview. That such a letter was written I know, and Mr. Stanton might think he could get more from your interest than my love. The bond being without date, was not valid; but for your consolation, I will tell you, that had you been less grasping and paid the money, I had most probably ere this found a grave in Greece, without the will or the power to thwart your plans. Do you understand me now? and is it strange I ask for justice, not as a favour, but a right? Of you I demand the justice, convinced yours was the master spirit that planned, your father but the instrument."

"Who told you all this?" almost screamed De Roos, as he still struggled for composure.

"Gilbert; and papers to prove it are in my possession."

"Villain! Base villain! but he shall rue," cried De Roos, as he ground his teeth, and stamped with rage.

"Be calm, De Roos! there has been enough of guilt already. Gilbert is gone to answer for his deeds before a just but merciful Judge, and the threat of exposing his theft, by which you bent him to your will, is vain."

"Dead! Gilbert dead! Beyond my power?" inquired the furious De Roos.

"He is, and if repentance can win him pardon, through faith, I hope he has it, were it only for his pity of my poor mother."

"False villain! Can a man win pardon for one crime, by committing another? Vile wretch! he pleaded to see his relations; how then came he to Florence?"

"He never went to Florence; but believing himself dying, sent for me."

The outward signs of passion were subdued, and with a mastery few possessed, he resumed his mocking tone.

"And so you believe my father will yield his title to a base-born brat, for the wild raving of a dying man. Think it not. We gave you proof, and he answered your questions whilst in a sane mind; and how can you say his second tale, allow he uttered it, was the true one?"

"Beware De Roos! You may go too far. He answered my questions, under the gaze of your eye, and the threat of exposure as a thief; had he been a bolder man, he would have cleared my mother at my birth; and have known you dared not, for your own sake, punish his guilt. Since you require proof, here is his deposition, signed by two magistrates, and other witnesses."

De Roos took the paper, read it through, and examined the signatures; whilst nothing but his ashy cheek, and compressed lip, gave sign of the rage within. A sudden light came into his eyes, no others were by, it would be but oath against oath; man against man; he made an abrupt movement, but Fitzallan's eye was upon him.

"You may spare yourself the shame of destroying that paper," he said calmly, "I have a duplicate, with the marriage certificate, and other documents."

De Roos dashed the paper on the ground, gnashed his teeth, and confronted his cousin, whose calm steady look changed not before his furious glare. The passion of De Roos was awful, the more so, as no word escaped him; as it seemed from the impossibility of speech to describe his rage and hatred, and thus they stood confronting each other for some minutes; the slight elegant form of the one trembling with fury; the more stately figure of his adversary calm and dignified, waited the explosion of his fury. But against all expectation no explosion took place. The eyes of De Roos sought the ground, his head dropped, and after a few moments of silence, he said, in a faltering tone, "The wound is as deep as you can desire; let me retire now, and do not leave this room till I see you again. I have much to say, but would not any should see my weakness."

"Forgive me!" said Fitzallan, taking his hand kindly, forgetting all his wrongs in an instant, and thinking only of the shame and sorrow of the person before him. "I did not reckon upon this, and have been too abrupt. I will not de-

tain you now, but let us meet again soon, and believe me you shall find me no heartless kinsman."

De Roos murmured thanks, or something like them, and without looking up quitted the room.

Left to himself, Fitzallan, for he has fully established his claim to the title, indulged in a thousand delightful visions; and it may well be guessed who stood in the fore ground of every ideal picture; but delightful as these visions were, even they began to satiate, and he longed to realise these brilliant dreams. He glanced at the elegant time-piece over the fire; more than an hour had passed since his departure, and yet De Roos had not returned.

Again he tried to picture to himself meeting and explanation, blush and sigh and smile; but it would not do; the vision was unconnected, its charm had fled. The last quarter struck, and Time held up his scythe in a menacing attitude at Love, and shook his hour-glass. As he became more impatient his pity decreased. A few minutes more were passed in pacing the room—it would not do—the motion of the body could not quiet the turmoil of the mind, and it was with difficulty he restrained himself from seeking his cousin.

He opened the window, and stepped into the garden. There was nothing very inviting in the prospect at such a season, but the air might cool the fever of his blood, and he kept the library in sight.

His uniform kindness and consideration for all around him, had won the respect and regard of every dependant, and the gardener soon found an excuse for approaching to offer his best wishes and congratulations on his arrival. He tried to return the man's good-will with his usual courtesy; but his manner was so distant, that even the gardener observed it, and guessed its cause.

"If you are waiting for Mr. De Roos, sir, you will have to wait some time, I am thinking; for when master goes to Hurlestone, he would never come away if he could help it."

"Mr. De Roos is in the house," replied Fitzallan, rather annoyed at this intelligence, and the knowing look which accompanied it, since it seemed a confirmation of the many reports that had reached him.

"I beg your pardon, sir, but I saw master on the top of the hill that leads to Hurlestone, an hour since."

"Impossible!"

"I'd venture my whole year's wages on it, sir. Why I

should know master a hundred miles off, and he seemed riding for his life too."

The truth flashed on Fitzallan's mind. "Idiot that I was! to let myself be fooled by such a villain," and without waiting to inquire into the wonderful phenomenon, of the man's being able to distinguish his master, at the distance of a hundred miles, he rushed into the stable-yard.

"Has your master had a horse?" he inquired of a wondering groom.

"Yes, sir."

"How long since? and which way did he go?"

"About an hour since, sir; he ordered his fastest hunter to be saddled, and would scarcely wait to have the girths fastened, and set off full speed towards Hurlestone.

"Bring my horse out instantly."

"Sir!"

"What do you stare at? Bring my horse out instantly, I say."

"Why sir, master said you would not want your horse for some hours, and told us to take it down to the blacksmith's, to have a fore shoe put on."

Fitzallan was nearly beside himself. What he could purpose by such conduct he could not guess; but something wild and daring connected with Miss St. Maur seemed certain, and he not there to thwart it! And what were life, and birth, and title without her? At that moment his heart answered "Nothing."

"Saddle me your master's fleetest horse, and this for haste," holding up money.

"I would directly, sir, but master sent them all out to exercise when he went away."

Fitzallan stamped with impatience. A boy came from behind an outbuilding.

"The groom, sir, told me to take your horse to the blacksmith's, but I was very busy, and so—"

"I understand; bring him out."

Fitzallan mounted in an instant, threw a crown to the boy, without one thought of the impropriety of rewarding disobedience, and dashed out of the yard at full speed. The gardener had indeed spoken truth. De Roos was speeding towards Hurlestone to execute a scheme, even in his own idea almost hopeless; but it was his only chance in that quarter. Creditors were pressing; once aware of his change of fortune they would become importunate, and to blight his

cousin's hopes would be triumph indeed. Thus love, hate, and interest urged him on to win the lady by threat or entreaty. It was this thought which enabled him to control the expression of his rage, and ask for pity, whilst, as we have seen, he took every precaution the hurry of the moment allowed, not to be interrupted by Fitzallan. Having ordered her carriage at once, Helen, though still too ill willingly to encounter company, had issued no orders for denial, and he was in consequence admitted, much to her annoyance.

Her manner towards him was, as it had ever been since the scene at the Mahons, calmly polite, mixed with an indifference, which had grown upon her of late, as to what interpretation the world might put on his attentions. True, she believed she had fathomed his character, and "that polished hypocrite," was the gentlest term she could apply to him; but when she learnt others, too, could deceive, particular anger faded into general disgust, almost indifference; and convinced he understood her too well to hazard a refusal, and not aware of the full extent of the reports in circulation, she contented herself with giving no encouragement to his pretensions; and their interviews were always of his seeking, not hers. But her calm and polite indifference could not withstand the flutter of his manner, and the tender but hurried earnestness with which he inquired after her health, and expressed his pleasure at seeing her. As no one was present to draw conclusions, as he might wish, she was surprised, and at last looked curious. This was a point gained, and he thought, could he have had time, he might have succeeded; but there was no time to waste, and he could not conceal from himself that a certain misgiving, and the necessity of speed, rendered him less efficient than of old.

When he found he had excited interest, he started up, walked abruptly to the window, and heaved sigh on sigh. Helen vouchsafed a look of surprise, and then took no farther notice. This plan would not succeed; so he strode back from the window, stood before her in agitated silence for some moments, and then took her hand, as if by a sudden impulse, and pressed it gently.

She snatched it away. "What means this impertinence, Mr. De Roos?" she inquired in a haughty tone.

The first step was taken, and the part must be sustained.

"Forgive me if my passion and grief have for a moment tempted me to incur your displeasure. Do not, I entreat, bid me depart in anger. Surely absence is agony enough, without such an aggravation!"



"Are you going then?" she asked, in a tone that to his quick ear conveyed anything rather than pain at the idea.

Half maddened at the thought, he became more earnest, more wild, more extravagant. "Yes, dearest! best beloved! my unhappy fate calls me away; but I cannot depart in silence: my words may offend, but they must be uttered. I had lived in the world from my earliest years. I had seen beauty and elegance; I had heard of virtue and benevolence; I had listened to syren voices:—but I had smiled at the rhapsodies of lovers. Till I saw you, all that that I had fancied—all that others only thought they had found—I neither knew the rapture or agony of love. I struggled against the feeling, but in vain; and now, even should you doom me to misery, I must still glory in my love. But you cannot, you will not doom me to despair. I know your penetration has discovered my faults: I own them great, for I had no mother to guide my youth; but under your influence I may, I will, become all you can wish. I ask not to hurry you. I will wait weeks, months, and years, only promise my devotion shall win favour at last. Every thought has long been devoted to you; to you then let me devote my after-life. Give me but hope! grant me one smile! and I will wait as a slave even for years."

"And repay as a tyrant?" said Helen, recovering from her surprise.

"Good heavens! can you believe this possible? Some one has maligned me. Let me—"

"Stop!" she said coldly, still unroused to anger, though more and more amazed. "It is a pity such eloquence should be wasted, as it must be in the present instance; for neither my pride or vanity, are moved as you desire, at having conquered the unconquerable. As for love, *ce n'est pas la question*. Why I have been favoured so suddenly with this brilliant explosion I cannot imagine; but as I consider you the most accomplished tactician in Christendom, I conclude it was intended to answer some great end."

The very calmness and indifference with which this was spoken, rendered it the more irritating, and the gentleman had some difficulty to repress his rage and disappointment; but he did repress them, and looked and spoke like injured innocence.

"That I should hear such words from your lips, is an agony I never dreamt of. What have I done to deserve them? If they are founded on the assertions of others, I will make

them retract the falsehoods. I claim to confront my accuser."

"It would be better if you did: that accuser is your own heart."

A momentary confusion witnessed the truth of the assertion.

"And who has pretended to read my heart, and give its throbbings such vile motives? Will you yield me a prey to the deceiver? Breathe but his name, and his blood shall avenge the wrong."

"You are getting violent, Mr. De Roos," said our heroine, in the same quiet tone; "and that is neither elegant or expedient. Besides, ladies never fight; and I owe my knowledge of your character to my own penetration. You cannot argue me out of my conviction, and it would be but waste of time to try at it. Why you should have subjected your pride to the shame of a refusal, since you have long been aware of my sentiments, I cannot guess; it was a wild and hopeless scheme, and seems to lack of your usual wisdom. Your character still stands high in the world, which sees as you would have it see; and if you have a talent for deception, you are not the only monster in the world, and my opinion is nothing. And now leave me; for Doctor Musters forbids excitement."

It was the gentleman's turn to look surprised. A refusal so cool, an avowal so frank, was beyond the imagination of man. The sigh, and the melancholy look, when she spoke of his not standing alone in deception, were his only consolation; and on them he determined to build for the gratification of hate. Further entreaty must be useless. One effort to intimidate, and then to adopt some other expedient. He drew himself up, and looked indignant.

"I cannot complain of your candour now, however I may wish it had been exercised before, and thus my heart saved from this fresh infliction. But I have, doubtless, been misled by my own presumption; and that I have not been alone in the opinion, is, of course, attributable to a common blindness, or your deeming the idea a fitting veil for something you wish concealed. I, at least, will never breathe one word of blame, but bear my pain in secret and in silence."

She rose from her seat, whilst her before pale cheek lost the hue of sickness, and her eye flashed back his indignant glance.

"Do you mean to insinuate, that you and others believe I have encouraged attentions, which I meant not to reward?"

"Far be it from me to say any thing to distress you; and, believe me, I will endeavour to shield you from censure. All must have been in error, rather than you; and if you would but allow me to hope—"

"Hope nothing, sir; you have never been deceived; and if the world think thus, it has learnt it from you, and not from me,—you have long been aware that I knew and have avoided you. This matter must be looked to and your conduct shown in its true light. The doors of Hurlestone are closed against you for ever."

She rang the bell.

"Mr. De Roos's horse," she said, as the servant entered the room.

"Yes, ma'am."

De Roos had been silent from surprise at her sudden change. To appeal from such a decision a second time seemed hopeless; yet would he venture one more threat—inflict one wound; and then, if needs must be, depart.

He approached her where she stood in her stately anger, and his eyes had the same insolent expression, which had formerly so much angered and distressed her.

"Is this conduct generous, or even prudent? remember, I spared you before!"

She was confused for an instant, for memory brought Elliott to her mind, and that might well overwhelm her? but her spirit was roused, and she would not bend to the insolent being before her.

"State the matter truly, Mr. De Roos, and it will be seen I owe you nothing. You concealed, for your own pleasure, what it would not have suited your plans to reveal, and, by your deception, strengthened my conviction of your duplicity."

He bit his lip. "I have no plans now to induce further concealment; beware how you dare a desperate man!"

"Threats to a woman! and in her own house! Away!"

"Then you brave me to tell?"

She shrunk, trembled, and then rallied.

"I neither brave nor plead. If it can advance your views, it will be told, do what I would; if otherwise, you will not afford the object of your hatred such a triumph."

He absolutely stared at her with wonder and admiration, as outdoing himself in penetration; and this very admiration, whilst it convinced him of the hopelessness of further effort, increased his regret, and strengthened his wish for revenge.

"It would be useless to ask your pardon, for you could not grant it; if I had better understood the depth of your character, I had not subjected myself to the shame of this refusal: but I was not myself; I was urged on by hate, as well as love. I could not bear Elliott's insolent boast; I could not listen with patience to his assertion, that you waited but for his asking; that you pined for his bidding; that your health faded from his delay. I could not, I would not, believe you were so fallen as to wait upon his pleasure; as he said 'to live but on his smile—wither in his absence.' But I was mistaken! Elliott spoke but truth, and, at his first hinting, you will be his. I estimate your dignity too highly, it appears. Farewell! Ere we meet again, much may have changed; the bright may have darkened; the dark may have brightened; the proud may have bent to the tyrant yoke; the love refused to one, may be despised by another."

He looked upon her with malignant triumph, as he saw the deadly wound was given, and that his words had been as daggers. Her stately anger had passed away; the blush on her cheek had vanished; her lips quivered, and she grasped at the sofa for support. Any other must have felt pity; but De Roos as he opened the door to depart, turned, for a last look, to satiate his malice, and would have vented his triumph in words, but feared to awaken suspicion of his truth.

The deadly faintness that had come over her subsided. Could this be true that he had said? She would question! The trampling of a horse's hoofs came on her ear—she sprang to the window. De Roos raised his hat, waved it in the air, bowed till his forehead nearly touched his horse's mane, threw on her a glance of insolent triumph, and then dashing the spurs in his horse's sides, till the blood-gouts fell on the earth, he was out of sight and hearing before she could bid him stay, or determine such was her wish. He was too wary to submit to the questions of one so penetrating.

As may be guessed, Fitzallan lingered not on his road, but as he reached the top of the hill looking down on Hurlestone, from whence he had waved his last adieu to its mistress, compassion to his horse, and the sight of De Roos returning, induced him to slacken his speed. So impatient was he to reach Hurlestone, and so angry at the deception, that he meditated for a moment the passing his cousin at full speed; but a desire to learn from his looks, if not from his words, the purport and result of his visit, made him relinquish the idea. The part of the road from which he was

watching the approach of his wily foe, was bounded on one side by a steep and high bank, whilst the other was rendered rather dangerous by a deep and precipitate quarry.

No sooner did De Roos perceive his cousin, than putting spurs to his horse, he dashed towards him with the impetuosity of one determined to overthrow every obstacle in his path. Fitzallan remarked the action, and moved quietly to the side of the road farthest from the quarry. Still De Roos continued his headlong career, till the horses almost touched, and then, seeing his adversary prepared for the shock, with a sudden movement he reined in his horse, till he drew him back almost upon his haunches, and then shouted, in a mocking tone—

"So, Grahame Elliott! the flower of chivalry! has learnt to fear."

"Lord Fitzallan has learnt to set too high a value on life, to trust to one whom no principles of honour can bind, and whose reckless daring is equal to his duplicity."

De Roos took off his hat with a malignant mockery of respect.

"I do most humbly crave your Lordship's pardon for not giving your Lordship your Lordship's title. I should have known the newly elevated are somewhat jealous in these matters! And so your Lordship really thought your Lordship's person was in danger. We must petition his most gracious Majesty to appoint you prime minister, or commander-in-chief; from your wise precautions, the peace of Europe would be certain, or our men would live to fight another day. Now, I can assure your Lordship, Reginald De Roos has no more inclination to become a spectacle for the vulgar, that Grahame De Roos, Baron Fitzallan, &c. &c. has to be imbedded in limestone, and hereafter produced as an organic remain, to invent or destroy a system."

Irritating as were both speech and manner, Fitzallan retained his self-command, and, looking steadily at him, merely said—

"After your past and present conduct, a longer parley cannot be desirable; our agents shall arrange all that is necessary. Good morning!"

Even De Roos looked abashed for an instant at this calm reproof, but recovered himself, and placed his horse across the road to prevent his departure.

"So you were impatient at my delay, were you! and would not credit the tale, I suppose. You should have known me

better than to suppose I wanted two hours solitude to whine over a change of fortune; but you never will get quit of that foolish habit of judging others by yourself! Well, I see you are impatient to proceed, and offer your congratulations, but you must felicitate me first; remember you are to be bridesgroom man at the wedding."

"What wedding!" asked Fitzallan abruptly, trembling for the answer.

"What wedding? Why the wedding of Reginald De Roos and Helen St. Maur, to be sure! A very goodly match I trow, and a handsome couple!" and he let the reins fall on his horses neck, crossed his arms, and revelled in his rival's agony.

"Impossible! 'tis false!" burst from the lips of Fitzallan, as he returned a look of defiance to his enemy's malignant scrutiny.

"False! Baron Fitzallan? This is strange language for one gentleman to hold to another; though the one may be a Lord, and the other a commoner! Do you judge me so wanting in wisdom and pride, as to have sped on such an errand unadvisedly; or why have you lingered, if not to read my tale in my looks? Am I much like a despairing lover, think you?"

"At least I will hear it from her own lips," exclaimed Fitzallan bitterly.

"Now will I wager my commonage against your peerage, that you do not."

"It is false then?"

"False! Why, as I said before, that is rather a strong term; it might be that you mistook me, and understood jest for earnest."

"Villain! How dare you trifle thus?" and Fitzallan's hopes sent the blood again to his cheeks.

"Villain, my Lord, is neither a very gentle, nor a very gentlemanly term: it should be kept for robbers and murderers."

"It will equally apply to seducers, liars, and defrauders."

Rage and shame deprived De Roos of the power of utterance; but he forced his horse close up to Fitzallan, and raised his arm as if to strike, whilst the fury expressed on his features was fearful to gaze upon. Fitzallan looked at him steadily, and stood prepared for defence, but spoke not. In a few minutes the expression of rage left the features; the arm sank, and De Roos again spoke without a further allusion to the term.

"I am not to be the happy man: the lady prefers waiting for your cold approaches, though sighing at the delay. Yes, Fitzallan! you will be blest indeed, if you have but the spirit to snatch the prize. It was you she meant to save instead of me, when she stopped the runaway; and your title and your fortune would have been well exchanged, to have heard her whispered words of tenderness, and murmured reproaches of your coldness, as she bent over me, mistaking me for you: but you are as timid with woman as daring with man; and I should not wonder if some more bold and spirited wooer were to step in and give me the triumph of seeing you rejected; for the lady hates vacillation, and wants but the excuse of a little energy to yield. And now, as I can feel for your impatience, and despair of detaining you, I will make one request and be gone. Will you pledge me your word, no one shall learn our change of fortune till eight and forty hours have passed? I know you have no taste for revenge, or I would not ask you to resign the delight of knowing your enemy, writhing under the gossip and scandal of this dull place, where they have nothing else to talk about."

A nonchalant air was assumed, but it could not completely veil the real earnestness of the speech, and Fitzallan hesitated.

"I certainly have no wish to subject you to the pain of unpleasant remarks, but——."

"Oh! I understand you, most noble cousin!" resuming his mocking tone, "you have not forgotten my ruse of this morning, and suspect some new stratagem; moreover, you think one at least should be told, lest she resent the presumption of the basely born. That would be a pity, certainly. Grahame Elliott might chance to be rejected, whilst the Baron Fitzallan is sure of success. And this is the timidity of true love I conclude! Now I doubt if the lady admire it more than I do. Tell it to her, by all means. Have I your pledge as to others?"

It would appear ungenerous to refuse, delay was irksome, rebuke thrown away, so the pledge was given, and Fitzallan urged his horse to its utmost speed—on what road all may guess.

De Roos looked after him. "Now let him but press his suit with an ardour and haste; that may look like presumptuous certainty, and I may yet triumph in revenge, if not in love. The men have told the heiress she is perfect, and on my word she is nearer to it than I thought possible; but all

have their faults, and she has pride: little towards her own sex, but a whole ocean towards the other. Trench by look or word, on what she calls her woman's dignity, and I would as soon combat with a lioness. The very flashing of her eyes but late was scathing. Now have I half a mind to linger here, and risk my future fortune for the rapture of a taunt at the rejected lover, and the glory of thinking it was my doing. But no!" he added, after a pause, his manner losing its elevation, "that would be hoping and risking too much; the heiress is but a woman, weaker from the very depth and purity of her love. He will advance, she retreat; he will look ardent, she haughty; he will deprecate, she soften; and blushes, tears, and smiles, conclude the scene. Even Lucy Martin will be forgotten, and I shall have played the amiable and the church-going, the listener to twaddles, the flatterer to *exigeantes*; for seven long months in vain, at the cost of innumerable wounds to my pride, an expensive horse to Alford, and worse, the introduction of my hated cousin to a happiness kings might envy; for should she say No to-day, she will say Yes to-morrow.

"Oh, woman! thou art the very epitome of weakness. We tell you that you rule, and you believe it; and the slave hugs her chains.

"Well, if I ever did love it was Helen St. Maur: and if I had won her? What then? Why she might have had cause to rue her fate. The past is the past—and he is a fool who grieves over its sorrows and mishaps—the future is still mine. I am yet the fascinating Reginald De Roos!"—and turning his horse's head, he rode off in a contrary direction to that in which he had come.

De Roos had been a skilful marksman, his arrows had been poisoned; each had taken effect, and the wound was still smarting, the venom still spreading in the breast of our heroine, when Mr. Elliott was announced, with such speed had his good horse borne him on his errand.

Nor had the marksman's skill been less as regarded the gentleman. His happiness at being cleared from shame, and holding an honourable station in society; the hope, nay the conviction that he was beloved; the contrast of his present feelings with those at the time of his departure; in short, his brilliant prospects of love and fortune, gave full effect to the hints and assertions of De Roos, and never was being more inclined to play the ardent and devoted lover, than Lord Fitzallan, when he entered the drawing-room at Hurlestone. Had



he been left self-occupied, he might have perceived that the servant rather debated, whether this was the real identical Mr. Elliott or not. Nor was it surprising that he should so debate, for the Mr. Elliott of the winter was a totally different person from the Mr. Elliott of the summer. The figure was no longer gaunt and lanky, the movements doubtful and occasionally awkward from lameness; but though very tall, and still rather thin, the figure was graceful, the tread firm, light and dignified. The sickly hue of suffering had given place to a healthy brown, partly the effect of a southern clime, through which the rush of the eloquent blood glowed bright and clear. The eyes had lost the languor of disease, and melted in softness, or flashed with fire, varying with his varying feelings. The black patch and the wig were gone, and the latter replaced by dark glossy hair, with an auburn tinge, curling and waving in rich luxuriance. In truth, he was a very proper man; and though his features could not boast the regularity of those of De Roos, no preferrer of mind to manners—of inward worth to outward polish—could have hesitated as to the superiority. The beauty of the one was worldly, material; that of the other noble, spiritual.

From doubt or accident the servant announced him indistinctly, and Helen, who was little equal to any exertion, rose to receive him, ignorant whom to expect, and with her indignation against him unsubdued. A chair was already placed, so the servant left the room almost the same instant that he entered.

Every feature glowing with hope and animation, Fitzallan advanced towards our heroine, who looked up at his approach, uttered a faint exclamation, turned deadly pale, and would have sunk to the earth, had he not sprung forward and supported her.

"Speak to me!" he exclaimed, as he bent over her in alarm. "Helen, dearest Helen!" he continued more wildly and more tenderly, as she spoke not, moved not. "Forgive me, if in the delirium of my happiness, I came upon you thus suddenly. Do but speak! if only one word!" then believing her quite insensible, he drew his arm more closely round her, and bore her to a window, which he threw up, urging her all the time to look at him, to speak to him, with words and accents of the most devoted tenderness.

The words, the act, the motion, restored her to herself; she started from his support, gasped for breath, whilst anger and indignation supplied her with strength, and the blood rushed

to her cheeks. Was not his conduct a confirmation of what De Roos said? Had he stood before her, the same as when he had left her, pale, ill, and suffering, pity might have pleaded for him; but now she construed his look of animated hope into the triumphant vanity of the coxcomb, and saw before her the deceiver of Lucy Martin, and the vain-boasting lover.

De Roos had read her correctly, and the pride of woman's dignity repressed the force of woman's love, and she spoke proudly and haughtily as she repelled his still offered support.

"Why this intrusion? and whence this presumption?"

"Intrusion! Presumption! Did I hear you aright?"

"You did hear me aright, sir. I would be alone."

He turned pale. Was this a dream! or was every high hope to be thus blighted, withered. Had she resented his presumption in the bower? He had thought not. Had another supplanted him? And had all that De Roos had said been false, and only meant to procure him the pang of a refusal? But then there was his own memory of the past, and he would not think her a coquette.

"To what cause am I to attribute a reception so harsh? a dismissal so prompt?"

He paused for an answer, but she felt embarrassed how to reply to so plain a question, and he continued.

"I had believed that the depth of my misery at our last meeting had won pity for my sufferings, pardon for my presumption; more than I dared not, would not, ask. That hour of parting had a charm that almost dispelled its agony—how different from this meeting! You assign no cause, yet you meet the proffer of a heart, whose deep devotion you cannot doubt, with coldness and scorn. Were my hopes too daring as we stood together in the pale moonlight, and the heart vowed itself to you for ever? A frown had repressed those hopes!" Recollections and references must be painful; she felt her strength-wavering, giving way, before them; besides, with her previous opinions, she read insult in his allusions to the moment in which her heart had owned his influence, and she interrupted him abruptly and haughtily, "Let the past be forgotten, sir. There was delusion; better there should be no remembrance."

"Certainly, madam, since you wish it. It is not for me to refer to the past," and indignant at her conduct, his manner was as haughty as hers.

A silence succeeded. He might forget, but she must remember that he had twice risked life for her sake; but she

dared not trust herself with the thought, and she broke the awkward silence.

"A continuance of this interview can but be painful to both. Believe me, you have my best wishes for your future happiness."

"You say truly, madam; and I thank you for your good wishes," he added bitterly. "As there has been delusion once you say, it is better we should clearly understand the footing for the future. In what light would it please Miss St. Maur to consider me?"

"As a common acquaintance, almost a stranger."

"Quite a stranger! if you please, madam. Permit me to return your good wishes for the future," and after an exchange of haughty bows, he quitted her.

But thoughts and feelings crowded fast upon him. The shock had been so sudden, so unexpected, he could scarcely believe it real. Had he indeed been under a delusion, when he had indulged in hopes, and read her words and looks to favour them. Had she not risked life for him in truth, if not avowedly. A flashing of light came across him. He could not be ignorant of her value for birth; she might still believe him the child of shame; and if he had considered this a bar to their union, why might not she in justice do the same. Though this did not argue for the strength of her love, and there was nothing in his rank, and (for that rank) slender fortune, that could be a temptation to one who might have chosen almost where she pleased, and he thought he knew her too well to think she would barter her hand for wealth or title, with hasty steps he retraced his way, and again stood before her. No sooner had the door closed, than she had sunk on the couch and buried her face in its cushion; in spite of the indignant haughtiness she had shown, and her firm resolve never to be his, from a conviction of his guilt, she dared not listen to his departing steps.

It was thus he found her on his return. She knew he was standing beside her; she would have given much to know why he was there; but she durst not look up: she could but still her emotion, and strive for strength. His anger at her change was forgotten, he bent over her, he would have taken her hand, but she withdrew it hastily.

"Miss St. Maur," he said, in a low voice, that faltered with emotion, "I would but ask one question, and you need fear no further persecution. Has the idea of my shameful birth influenced your late conduct, and could different circum-

stances alter your decision? You wronged me, if you deemed I could tender you a heart writhing under its own shame."

She was surprised at his words, but indignant that he should think the crime of his parents less pardonable than his own, she raised her head, and met his look of anxious tenderness with one of proud disdain.

"I thought you had understood my meaning before, and would have spared me this second intrusion; my opinions and decision could know no change, were you proved to hold the highest station in the land."

"It is enough, madam," he replied, with disdain equal to her own. "I have to thank you for your candour."

He bowed, and rushed from the room without further comment. When Caroline Mahon entered the apartment soon after, she found her friend lying on the ground insensible.

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## CHAPTER XII.

"For a husband my mistress has anxiously watch'd,  
And at length 'tis believ'd that she's gloriously match'd,"

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"I should have doubted all the world beside,  
But trusted him."

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"The weight of blood is on their souls."—CAMPBELL.

DAYS had passed since this painful interview, and Helen had left her sick chamber for the first time, and was reclining on a couch, supported by pillows, in her favourite apartment, for she shrank with dread from entering the drawing-room. During these days her sufferings had been great. Memory had recalled every word, every tone; and his look of bitter anguish as he left her, was not to be forgotten. The delicate frame had sunk under the shock, but the mind was gradually recovering its vigour; for she had turned to consolation where only it can be found. The shock her trust in man had received, was not got over. Since he had proved un-

worthy she could rely on none. But she had conquered the first feeling of disgust towards all, and her thoughts seemed but the more anxiously bent on soothing sorrow, since she had learnt how deeply the human heart could suffer. She wished to have some explanation of his last words, but since that could not be, at least she might not inquire, she tried to content herself with the idea that one cause of his sorrow was removed; his health too was restored, and she had nothing left but to pray for his repentance, and future happiness.

The painful task had been performed, and they had been separated for ever in this world, by her own decision. At first, the certainty of their separation had been a fresh source of sorrow, for she had cherished, unknown to herself, a vague hope that something might occur to prevent this necessity; but she knew she ought to rejoice that the trial was past. To love—to trust again, was impossible; but she might make others happy, and there was a world beyond the grave. Her mind was firmly set to do its duty; and, as a first step, she determined not to indulge in vain regrets for the past, or delightful anticipations for the future; but to occupy herself incessantly on the present, and for the benefit of others.

Caroline Mahon, who sought to repay the great obligations of herself and family, by every soothing care, returned soon after from a walk, and after adjusting the pillows for the invalid, with all a sister's gentleness, took a seat at a little distance, and occupied herself with a book.

"What is the matter, Caroline?" inquired Helen, after a while. "You do not seem to have much taste for reading this morning, and you look troubled. Has anything happened to vex you?"

Caroline coloured, and answered slightly, "I have a headache."

"Aye, but what makes your head ache? Come, tell me at once. I know it is something you think will vex me, or you would not hesitate. You cannot guess how well I shall bear it."

Caroline hesitated; but some answer she must give, and it was better Helen should hear it from her than from others; so she turned away, that she might not seem to observe her, and answered—

"I have heard something that has vexed me, dear Helen. I would not believe it on the assertion of Mrs. Jones, but I have since heard it confirmed."

"The assertion of Mrs. Jones! Why if she were to say

black were black, I should doubt if it were not grey. What new fiction has she invented? Have I drowned myself for love? or am I going to fight the Great Cham of Tartary? I was in hopes I had frightened her out of making me the subject of reports."

"I assure you she is sufficiently alarmed, and talks of you with all due respect; but this concerns the marriage of another, and Mr. Dalton not only confirmed it, but insisted on my telling you."

"Then tell me instantly. Mr. Dalton is a wiser man than some think him."

Caroline was surprised at these words; but fearing the shock would be greater from being unexpected, answered slowly and cautiously.

"Mr. De Roos persuaded Miss Carleton to accompany him to town, where they were privately married."

"Mr. De Roos married to Miss Carleton!" cried Helen, starting from her couch in surprise. Caroline was at her side in an instant.

"You forced me to tell you, dear Helen!"

"Psha!" cried her friend, half vexed, half smiling at her terrified look. "I am not going to faint, so back to your seat, and tell me every thing, without making me ask."

"Well then; when Mr. De Roos left Hurlestone the other day, he rode direct to Marisford, and it is supposed, arranged every thing with Miss Carleton for their flight that evening; for at eight o'clock a carriage and four drove up to the door, with a pretended summons from her parents, who are nursing her brother, and in a few minutes she and her maid got into it, took up Mr. De Roos on the road, and proceeded to London, where, being of age, they found no difficulty in getting married. From thence they went to France. Some say, for you will hear it all, that he adopted this rash step in a delirium of disappointed love; whilst others assert that Mr. Elliott has turned out to be the real Lord Fitzallan, and that he has debts which made a hasty marriage with a fortune requisite.

"Ha! then this explains every thing," cried Helen involuntarily.

Caroline turned quickly round at the sound of her friend's agitated voice; but Helen's face was hid from her view, and she made no further comment.

"Now I think of it, Caroline," said Helen, after a very long silence, "had you any particular reason, the other day, for

asking if I had appointed a rector for Hurlestone? I have since fancied you had; but I fear I have been very selfish of late, and thought much more of myself than others."

"Oh no! never selfish, dear Helen! though you have seemed altered of late; but then you have been ill. You have been equally kind in acts, but I have fancied your manner different. You have granted and soothed as before, but then you have appeared to do it, either with a feeling of doubt as to your being able to confer happiness, or of mistrust as to the worth of the object. Your acts seem no longer the free overflowing of love; and nurse Smith says your smile looks like a blighted rose-bud."

"Has all this been?" and she sighed, and then added "We will try and amend this for the future; but you have not told me why you asked of the new Rector of Hurlestone."

Caroline coloured, bent down her head, and answered, evasively. "I was curious to know if you had attended to the recommendation of Mr. De Roos?"

Helen had no desire to say to whose recommendation she had attended, and she too used evasion, though determined to penetrate her friend's confusion.

"I have appointed a gentleman, of whose worth and fitness for his important office I have made every possible effort to assure myself; but you had some other reasons for your question, Caroline, and I may yet further your wishes, if you will only be candid."

Caroline coloured still more deeply; but before she could reply, a servant entered with a card. Helen looked at it, hesitated a moment, and then said, "Show the gentleman in." She struggled for composure, as if forcing herself to go through with a disagreeable task. "This verifies the old proverb, Caroline; here is the new Rector himself! Now you must not frown upon him; for had you been more candid, another might have filled his place; but you must do your best to entertain him, for I am weary."

At that moment Mr. Edward Aylmer was announced. Helen half rose to greet him; but as to any bow she was to receive in return, she might as well have spared herself the trouble. Scarcely had he caught sight of Caroline, ere he was by her side; eyes met; hands clasped; and the words "Edward," "Dear Caroline," were distinctly heard. Helen guessed the truth, and rejoiced in her friend's happiness; yet surely she may be forgiven, if a sigh rose at the contrast of her own fate. The lady and gentleman seemed perfectly unconscious that a third person was in the room; and Helen,

thus spared from thinking herself *de trop*, smiled at their eager questions and answers, half uttered, half imagined. She learnt enough from their incoherent conversation, which, from being too weak to leave the room alone, she could not avoid overhearing, to understand that Caroline and Mr. Aylmer had met at the young lady's aunt's, and a strong attachment arisen between them, which that gentleman's honourable conduct in paying his elder brother's debts, and consequent poverty had hitherto prevented from being avowed. My readers will have no trouble in guessing the name of the young clergyman mentioned in such high terms by Mr. Elliott; but, as Helen said, she had not appointed him till after many inquiries.

It was our heroine's care to do away with every obstacle to their union; and, as Mr. De Roos was no longer attainable or desirable, and Helen urgent and generous, the mother made little objection. The parsonage was fitted up, and made comfortable at her expense, and by her was the bride's trousseau supplied. Caroline and her lover both remonstrated; but there had been so much delicacy in all her arrangements, that they could not but yield to her kindness, and the melancholy smile with which she prayed them not to deprive her of her greatest happiness. She naturally shrunk from all mention of Fitzallan's name; and, as none but himself had reason to guess on whose recommendation the new Rector had been appointed, and, of course, the lovers were tolerably well occupied with each other, that name at whose mention she still trembled, was rarely alluded to; and having ascertained he would not be present at the wedding, she gratified her friend, by remaining to be her bridesmaid. Mr. Mahon was in his element, and the concerns of others were neglected, that he might attend the better to those of his intended son-in-law, who goodnaturedly yielded to him in most points, and smiled at the confusion he sometimes occasioned.

Never was paler bridesmaid; but her late illness, as some, and the conduct of De Roos, as others thought, furnished sufficient explanation for the predominance of the lily. It is certain nearly the whole county, including Caroline and her husband, were at fault as to the late occurrences, for most imagined the runaway match to have been caused by pique at some disagreement with Helen; a belief which her immediate relapse fully confirmed: whilst the brief visit of Fitzallan, some attributed to his having vainly endeavoured to play the mediator, others to his purpose of exposing the baseness of De Roos. Miss Grey, who alone knew, kept the secret



well; and, Mr. Dalton, who, from guessing half, was more puzzled than any, vainly sought an explanation from our heroine.

The day after the wedding, Helen went to town, for she found it impossible, with all her exertions, to regain peace at Hurlestone, where every object so strongly recalled the past. In a new scene, and the excitement of society, she hoped to exclude painful remembrances, and she knew Fitzallan had returned to Florence.

Her birth, her beauty, and, above all, her fortune, made her an object of flattery and court to all; but her high principles, founded on a sense of her own weakness, and the blight of her bright hopes, saved her from the peril of such incense. She had no petty ambition to become the leader of fashion; and, though she mingled in the gayest and highest circles, no merit, however humble, was over-looked; and, at her house might be met, not only the fashionable, but those most distinguished for talent, wisdom, and virtue. She skimmed lightly over the waters of pleasure, but her bark yielded not to the strong current of dissipation. Every day had its time for thought and reading, and the Sunday was never profaned. Nor was her charity put by as a useless appendage to a London lady; cases of distress were sought out and inquired into by those on whom she could rely; and the truly deserving never sought relief in vain, for she always remembered she was but a steward. Every thing around her was liberal and elegant, as fitted her station, but there was no waste, no extravagant luxury, no vying with others; and the portion of her income set aside each year for the poor, was frequently added to, but never, on any pretence, taken from. She passed much of her time with Lady Marston, who had the pleasure of observing a gradually increasing affection between her and Catharine.

Helen's fortune, with but half or none of her charms and virtues, would have attracted admirers; and one or two bold spirits tried their fate during the season, and met the disappointment they might have anticipated; for whilst her manner to gentlemen was calculated to win esteem and admiration, it should have repressed love, as it spoke perfect indifference to their attention. Some called her cold and insensible, some thought she had not got over her attachment to De Roos, for, to answer his own purposes, he had spread the report of their engagement far and wide; but even those rejected, owned she had never given them cause for hope.

Her first meeting with Mr. Dormer was anticipated with pain, but his pride had been so much wounded at her steady rejection, and supposed preference for De Roos, whom he despised, that she had nothing to encounter, but a cold and distant manner. This was a relief, and so completely was this manner kept up, that neither Lady Catharine Alford nor Mr. Euston could discover the slightest ground for jealousy; yet the former could never quite forgive his preference of our heroine, and the latter, though no longer dreading him as a rival, never forgot that he had presumed to address her in the language of love, and that she had admired and esteemed him. If he did not absolutely seek occasions to insult him, he at least never allowed a fitting opportunity to pass without seeking to annoy him. Both cherished the spirit of ill-will, for Dormer suspected her cousin of having influenced Helen's rejection; and there needed little to make them deadly enemies.

The spring had again come round in all the brightness of its beauty, and the travelling-carriage was at Helen's door, as Alford entered her drawing-room.

"How comes this, Helen? A fortnight since, when I left town, there was no talk of your departure, yet if I had not returned unexpectedly at eight this morning, you would have been off without saying adieu. You must positively stay for my mother's party, or we shall have a deadly quarrel.

"If you will quarrel, it must be with Sir Henry Halford, for he insists on change of air."

"Does he?" looking kindly at her. "You are pale! very pale! so I suppose I must not quarrel. You must take care of yourself—you have not been as was your wont for some time—so thin; and those speaking eyes so sunk and lustreless. Get Miss Grey to nurse you, and I will come down soon and see how you get on, for your letters will never tell the truth."

"You had better stay where you are," she said significantly, and he turned away; "but it is getting late, and you must hand me to my carriage."

"Now I think of it," he said, as he lingered at the carriage door, "have you heard that your ancient protégé, Elliott that was, Fitzallan that is, comes to town this week?"

He waited for an answer, and she was obliged to say "Yes."

"And yet you will not stay? Your patronage in the world of fashion would have been every thing to him. I shall tell him you run away on purpose to avoid him. Some

call him handsome now, and declare they never abused him; see the wonderful effects of a title! Have you heard further, that his time has of late been employed in wooing a daughter of Lord Dunotter's, and that the wedding is expected shortly?"

Again he paused for a reply, and again his victim answered "Yes."

"Then you have heard all about it, and it really is to be."

"Such seems the general opinion!"

"The general opinion! Why, you cautious diplomatist, I should not wonder if he had consulted you, and of course he will invite you to the wedding. Do get me an invitation, for I want to see how these things are done."

"I will get you nothing, if you detain me; I am ordered not to travel late."

"Rather a cavalier dismissal; but you may do any thing. Adieu! May every good attend you," and kissing his hand, the carriage drove off as she sank back in a corner.

The wheels had long ceased to rattle over the pavement, before Helen aroused herself. What was the indulgence of these deep regrets, but sinful repining at the will of Heaven, and why should his approaching marriage afflict her? His crime and her decision had already separated them for ever. A new attachment so soon might speak lightness of character, but that was only a defect, and should not be mourned for as his guilt had been. She felt she had rejected, but not forgotten; but she felt also the sinfulness of indulging in these painful reveries, which only nourished discontent and prevented resignation, and with a strong effort she turned her thoughts to better and to holier things.

"I am glad you are come!" said Mrs. Aylmer to Helen, some days after her return to Hurlestone. "I wanted to thank you for the beautiful flowers you have sent me this morning; the parsonage in my eyes is a perfect paradise, and I would not change lots even with Helen St. Maur."

Helen tried to smile, but a sigh came instead, as she thought how little her friend guessed the wisdom of her choice; but Caroline remarked it not, and continued.

"When I look round, and think I owe all this to you, dear Helen—Edward and all—I feel I never can repay my debt of gratitude."

Helen passed her arm round her waist, and kissed her affectionately, as she said, "Ever look thus happy, dear Caro-

line, and I am the debtor; it was all downright selfishness, to keep you near me."

Mrs. Aylmer shook her head at her hinting such a thing, and would have remonstrated; but Helen silenced her by threatening to run away.

"What was your husband telling you when I approached, that aroused such violent indignation?" inquired Helen, after they were quietly seated in the drawing-room; she looking out of the window, with her back turned to Caroline.

"Only something that had happened to a friend of his?" answered Caroline, evidently dissatisfied at the question.

"There is no particular reason why I should not hear, I conclude; and I understood sufficient to make me anxious to learn more."

Caroline was silent.

"If you love me, conceal it not," continued Helen, firmly and earnestly; "believe me, I can judge best in this matter, only tell me every thing."

"It shall be as you choose then, and I only hope you have judged wisely in the demand; but it is painful to find those base we have believed noble and good."

"It is, indeed!" said Helen shuddering, "but tell me all."

Caroline no longer refused, as she thought it might the more completely destroy all lingering affection.

"Some time since, a story came to Edward's ears about some village maiden's having been deceived and deserted by one who had falsely pretended love. The name of her reported deceiver was that of one in whom he felt the most friendly interest, and believed incapable of such an act. To learn the truth, he went to her native village, but she had left it, and none knew whither she was gone. After he came here, he heard the same story, though it does not seem to be generally known, and with much trouble, and many inquiries, he has ascertained that his friend is perfectly innocent. He cannot find out whither the woman is gone; but a servant of the really guilty person has disclosed all, and stated that his master intercepted a letter, and wrote an answer in a feigned hand, and under a feigned name."

Helen had hitherto listened in breathless emotion, and now, as her friend paused, questioned with wild eagerness.

"In mercy, tell me the name of the woman, and her real deceiver."

"Lucy Martin, and Mr. De Roos."

Helen's hands were clasped, with a wild and frenzied motion; a sudden exclamation escaped her, whether of surprise, horror, or thankfulness, could not be told, and Caroline was but just in time to save her from sinking to the ground. When she revived, there was much in her manner that puzzled her friend; but few in a sudden crisis act precisely alike. But for her preconceived opinion, she should have said there was a look of brightness in her eye; but if so, the lustre lingered not long. Veiling her face with her hand, Helen asked the name of the person to whom the guilt had been attributed.

"Lord Fitzallan; your former *protégé*, whilst Mr. Elliott, and who is so soon to marry the Honourable Miss Dunotter. He has not heard of the report, I believe, so has not been pained by it," and then seeing that the hand had sunk by Helen's side, and that she was again sinking into insensibility, she threw herself on her knees beside her, and with streaming eyes pressed her fondly to her, as she said; "Dear! dear Helen! I knew it would grieve you, but surely it is better you should be convinced he is not worthy of you."

If Helen understood these words, a shudder was the only answer, and no further reference was made to the subject, though it was some hours ere she was sufficiently recovered to return home.

And what had been her feelings at this disclosure of the truth? At first, the most unbounded joy. He was cleared—he was innocent! Her heart might again yield to its first, its only love. A love which must be but the stronger, in proportion as she had wronged him. And how could she thus have wronged him? How could she ever have doubted him? They might meet again—they might hereafter be united. But this hope was to be torn away—his approaching marriage was confirmed; confirmed too, by the wife of his most intimate friend. How could she doubt longer? Her wrong to him must remain unacknowledged—unrepaired, and he could not acquit her of trifling and coquetry. And was she not to blame? Her own heart condemned her. Her act had been right, but her motives had not been free from taint; for pride had influenced her nearly as much as a sense of duty. Half her agony had arisen, not so much because a grievous sin had been committed, as because she had been deceived in him she loved. Few young women can inquire into such matters, or even show they know them; but a word to her friend, Mrs. Gower, would have unveiled the

truth without the mention of her name, had not her pride prevented her from hinting at an error in the man she had chosen; or had she not been irritated by the inuendoes of De Roos. A calmer manner, a less haughty spirit, might have saved both from misery, though his appeared but transient. The knowledge of his innocence came too late for her own happiness; but her love was too pure not to teach her to pray for his. Humbled and ashamed, she bowed beneath the stroke, and sought more carefully for the future, that right acts should be performed from pure motives alone.

One consolation at least was her's. The suspicion of her fellow-creatures, that had blighted her life, was no more, and her warm heart might again enjoy its former benevolent pleasure in making others happy; and in the hope of heaven, and the love of all around her, she might cease to regret. But her sorrows and her trials were not over, and she had scarcely recovered from this last shock, when Lord Alford entered her presence, with an ill-concealed hurry in his manner, that prepared her at once for evil tidings.

"What has happened?" she asked eagerly. "I know there is something to tell. Your mother and sister?"

"Are well."

"Who then?"

"Compose yourself, dear Helen;" for her fears involuntarily rested on Fitzallan, and she looked wild and terrified.

"I will! I will! but in pity speak."

He pressed her hands, looking on her with a brother's love.

"Your cousin, I am grieved to say—"

"He is dead!" she screamed. "Dormer and he have met. I knew it—I knew it, though others saw it not."

"He still lives, dear Helen, and will, I hope, recover."

"Thank Heaven!" and she burst into a passion of tears.

In another hour she was on her road to London; and within two days established with Mrs. Hargrave in her cousin's house, nursing him with all a sister's love and care.

The quarrel which had caused this fatal duel, had arisen rather from the previous ill-will of the parties, than from any intentional insult.

A strong expression of Mr. Euston's, which Mr. Dormer had erroneously supposed meant to apply to himself, had produced a still stronger remark. With their former feelings, and with uncontrolled tempers, no wonder that high words should ensue, and a duel be the consequence. Alford's ab-

sence from town had prevented his attending Dormer, or interposing his good offices; and those who did act as seconds, were more anxious that every thing should be conducted on the most approved principles, than to bring about a reconciliation. To murder by rule was, in their eyes, an honourable deed; to murder without rule was another matter.

However violent their passions, neither were vindictive; and both asserted—and both were men whose assertions might be believed—that when they took their places on the ground, neither sought the life or wished the death of the other. Both felt they had been intemperate. Why did they not say so? The world would have called them cowards; and they were too cowardly to brave the world.

They fired together—both shot at random; but Euston's fire was wide and harmless, whilst that of his opponent took effect. Mr. Dormer's regret was deep, and fervently expressed; whilst the forgiveness of the wounded man was promptly and freely given. Alford and Fitzallan, who were returning to town together, seeing the bustle, and thinking they recognized the parties, came on the ground, and the sufferer was soon conveyed to his own house. The ball had entered his side, and his recovery was pronounced doubtful by his surgeons—impossible by himself. The doctors would have forbidden an interview with his cousin, fearing excitement; but his strong wishes prevailed, and they owned the good effect of her presence and nursing. Soon after her arrival, she learnt that during Alford's absence, Mr. Dormer and Lord Fitzallan had never quitted the house, but left when she entered, and neither intruded on her; yet the former made his friend the bearer of his deep regret and self-condemnation, and the latter, was constant in his inquiries.

Perfect quiet was ordered; and after he had executed his will, he yielded to the orders of the surgeons, and the wishes of his cousin, with a calm gentleness quite unexpected. Robert Euston was an altered man, saw his past errors, and it might be said of him what was said of another, "nothing in his life became him so much as the leaving it." It was now that his more generous feelings came into play. His sufferings never made him lose sight of the sufferings of others; and though Helen's presence was to him almost as life and light, he insisted on her taking an airing every day, and was most solicitous for her health.

On her return from one of those airings Alford handed

her from the carriage, and saying he wished to speak to her, led her into the drawing-room.

"What is this mighty matter, that makes you look so perplexed and hesitate so long? Make haste, Robert will expect me."

"I am perplexed how to tell you, and yet I would rather you should hear it from me than from another. I knew it myself but half an hour since, and could scarcely believe it. I doubt if you will ever credit it; but I may as well out with it at once. Dormer, to my great surprise, has proposed to Catharine; and she, to my still greater wonder, has accepted him!"

"Is that all?" said Helen, smiling. "Why, a half-wit might have guessed both occurrences were in train before I left town."

"You amaze me! I always thought them bitter enemies, and believed Catharine detested him."

"So she seemed, to those who looked not beyond the surface. And what should you know of a woman's heart? She would have died rather than revealed her secret; but having established the belief of her dislike to the world, she could then afford to show more courtesy to him; and there was a glory to his proud spirit in conquering her fancied enmity. Of late too, I believe, he has gone to her to sooth his regret. They have my best wishes for their happiness; and I can but hope," she added, more gravely, "that the late event may not prove a useless warning. I believe he deplores it even more bitterly than is imagined." "There is, indeed, no reading women's hearts" said Alford, half pleased at her not being surprised or distressed—half piqued at his own want of penetration. "Why I should not wonder if you denied next what every body believed concerning yourself?"

"Nor I neither," she said, with a smile and a sigh; "but I must go now, or Robert will miss me. Say more than is kind to Catharine for me, and all that is proper to Mr. Dormer."

She was so much engaged in thought as she entered her cousin's room, that she never had looked up till she had nearly reached the centre, and then to her surprise—and we may add her dismay—she found herself opposite to Lord Fitzalan, who was seated close to the couch on which her cousin was reclining. It was the first time they had met since her haughty refusal. And how were they to meet now? As common acquaintance, as she had desired; or perfect stran-



gers, as he had promised? His confusion was little less than her's, for he felt she might consider this visit as an intrusion; and thus, after the first look of surprise, neither ventured to glance at the other.

"Helen," said the low voice of the invalid, who had heard her step, though from his position he could not see her; "you must not quarrel with Fitzallan or me for his visit; he only entered at my peremptory command, that I might thank him for his kindness before you came, and his constant inquiries since; so you must accord his forgiveness."

Thus called upon, she rallied, and ventured upon a bow, though uncertain how it might be returned, as she said, in a tolerably steady voice, "I have before heard of Lord Fitzallan's kindness."

"And you must thank him for it too, Helen."

Helen coloured deeply. Though scarcely venturing to look up, she had been aware her bow had been returned, if not with warmth yet with respect; but to presume to thank him, whom she had wronged so much, she felt might be urging his politeness too far. He perceived her embarrassment, and relieved her from it; but in a way which showed he considered her reluctance to thank to arise from dislike and displeasure.

"I will not have Miss St. Maur teased to pay thanks for what deserves none: or if it did, for which you alone are answerable."

"Well, if you will not allow her to thank you, she shall at least congratulate you. You were always a great favourite of hers. Congratulate him prettily, for yourself and me, on his approaching marriage with Miss Dunotter."

Both started and changed colour, and Helen—almost sinking to the earth—could scarcely command herself sufficiently to say with any thing like composure:

"Lord Fitzallan will believe we both wish him every happiness."

She stopped to pick up something as she spoke, and before more could be said, the surgeons entered the room. Our heroine bowed to Fitzallan, without looking up, and they left the apartment by different doors.

The ball had been extracted, and the fever subdued; but the extreme weakness of the patient rendered his recovery very doubtful. Each day confirmed the fears of his friends and in one short week after this interview, Robert Euston had breathed his last, without a struggle, his head resting on

Helen's arm, one hand clasped in her's, and his last looks alternately bent on her or raised to heaven. One of his latest acts was again to implore her forgiveness for his former violence; and so far had better feelings conquered his jealousy and the selfishness of his love, that he had sincerely prayed for her happy union with one deserving of her.

Thus fell the young, the handsome, and the gay—in the spring of youth, with health, spirits, and temperament to enjoy and to delight! Thus perished the talented, the noble and the generous! the victim of his own undisciplined temper, and the uncontrolled passions of another! He had raised his arm against the life of a fellow creature, and he had tempted another to do the same; he had heeded not the command—"Thou shalt do no murder;" and he had been called to the presence of his Maker, to answer for the deed; but, in mercy, time had been given for penitence and prayer. Let us hope both were accepted.

His will, made the day after the meeting, was in accordance with the rest of his conduct. In it he took upon himself the blame of the duel, and, as a mark of friendly feeling, bequeathed to Mr. Dormer a valuable picture of which he had become the purchaser a short time before solely to annoy that gentleman, who had desired it. Horses, carriages, dogs, and some other things were left to Alford and Fitzallan, in gratitude for their attention. Some old servants were remembered; and then the rest of his property was bequeathed to his cousin, to be left by her, after her death, to any one of her children she might choose. The bequeather never reckoned on the contingency of her dying unmarried, or childless!

## CHAPTER XIII.

"I've seen thee in the sunset beams ;  
 I've lov'd thee as a thing divine.  
 How have I shunn'd thee ? but thine eye  
 Hangs o'er me, like a watching sphere,  
 Star of my solitary sky.  
 Where'er my spirit turns, 'tis there ;  
 For life, for death, the chain is twin'd ;  
 Thou'rt in my mind, thou'rt in my mind."  
 CROLY.

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"The moonshine, stealing o'er the scene,  
 Had blended with the lights of eve,  
 And she was there, my hope, my joy,  
 My own dear Genevieve.  
 She listen'd with a fitting blush,  
 With downcast eyes, and modest grace,  
 And she forgave me that I gaz'd  
 Too fondly on her face."

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WE will pass over our heroine's grief for the loss of her cousin, which was deep and sincere. Notwithstanding his faults, and the fears and pain he had so frequently caused her, she had never ceased to love him as a sister, and now she felt lonely, for the accents of love were displeasing to her, and she had no near relation. But one so young, so rich, so lovely, and so good, could not long feel desolate; it is only the poor that know the misery of loneliness! All vied in kindness and attentions, and Helen was not one to despise the blessings she possessed, and deliberately indulge in murmur, because one was wanting. True, the paper was taken up in haste, opened with a trembling hand, a small space in the last page glanced hurriedly over, and laid down with a relieved and brighter look; but the malicious say, that is the part of the paper to which all young ladies look.

The wedding of Mr. Dormer and Lady Catharine Alford had taken place, and the papers were filled with a long description of its guests, the splendour of the arrangements, the beauty, elegance, and accomplishments of the bride, and the departure of the happy pair for Paris. There are some who

delight in censure, and these said Mr. Dormer was more haughty than ever, and that a humbler and sadder demeanour after the late event, would have suited him better; but Mr. Dormer was not one to bare his breast to the crowd, and if Lady Catharine shared in the blame, to her might the same remark be applied. There was enough in former circumstances, setting aside the duel, to prevent such a character as Lady Catharine, from being perfectly frank to our heroine; though she no longer regarded her with envy, or ill will; but there was one expression in her letter, just before the wedding, that pained and surprised her friend. It was this: "May you be happy, Helen, for you deserve it; but they who brave the tempest, must abide the shock."

That Lord Fitzallan's marriage was still an accredited report, and that the delay was attributed to the entanglement of his affairs from the extravagance of his uncle, Helen knew, but she knew no more; for either lest his name should awaken the remembrance of her cousin, or some other cause, he was never mentioned by the Alymers.

"Here is Helen coming down the path," said Caroline to her husband. "How I wish I could see her step as light and buoyant as of old! There is now the quietude of thought or the melancholy of sadness ever mingled with her sweetness and former playfulness; but I will let her in myself, lest the presence of an unexpected guest should startle her;" and, without giving time for a remark, she left the room.

But the kind purpose was foiled, for, seeing Mr. Alymer at the window, Helen turned towards it, and before she could have imagined such a mischance, was standing face to face, at an abrupt angle in the path, with Lord Fitzallan, who, to avoid a meeting, had just left the drawing-room, by a door opening on the lawn. Surprised, distressed, Helen's eyes sought the ground, and she stood for some moments in silent agitation. Had she ventured to look up, she might have seen almost equal agitation, mingled with some other feeling which might not have displeased her: but, as she neither returned his bow nor answered his good morning, which she had not seen nor heard, Fitzallan, of course, concluded she retained her determination to meet as any thing, rather than friends, and his conduct took the colouring from this idea. The path was too narrow to allow of their passing conveniently; to turn his back upon her, and retire without speaking, was a rudeness—piqued as he was, and coquette as he had reason to believe her—that he could not commit; to address her, therefore, with cold respect, was all which was left him.

"I have to apologise, Miss. St. Maur, for this second intrusion, though perfectly unintentional, but I will no longer obstruct your path:" and stepping back a few paces, he stood amongst the shrubs, so as to leave her room to pass.

These words recalled Helen to exertion. She had been long schooling herself to meet him as the husband of another; now was the time to prove the benefit of that schooling, and even, as far as possible, make amends for her former haughty refusal; summoning, therefore, all her courage, she answered with a steady voice, though a downcast eye, and a burning cheek:

"It is I, Lord Fitzallan, should apologise for words uttered in a moment of irritation, and unwarranted by your conduct, past or present. The tongue is not always held in due control," she added, with an attempt at playfulness, "and I must beg Lord Fitzallan will consider me as one who must ever wish him well."

Again he stood before her in the path, but with what intent she could not tell, for the throbbing of her heart warned her not to look up, and before he could speak Mrs. Aylmer had joined them.

"I came out, dear Helen! to spare you the surprise of meeting an unsuspected visitor, but you foiled my purpose."

"Yes, I am always in the wrong," replied Helen; and then added, "but I should rejoice in this opportunity of thanking his lordship for his kindness to my cousin."

The tears came into her eyes, and she turned hastily away. Neither intruded on her sorrow by a remark, and in a few moments she took her friend's arm, and entered the house, followed doubtfully, by Fitzallan. Helen exerted herself to appear cheerful and at ease, yet there was a slight restraint in her manner, and, declining a pressing invitation to dine, she soon rose to depart.

"Come, Fitzallan!" said his friend, "I am going to walk back with Miss St. Maur, and you must come with us, for I want to show you some improvements."

Fitzallan had listened with breathless anxiety for her answer to the invitation, and, on her refusal, had sunk into a reverie, from which this address startled him.

"Oh, certainly; very beautiful!" he answered at random, only catching the word improvement.

"Beautiful! What is very beautiful?" asked his friend, laughing. "Why, you are dreaming of the absent. Assist me, Miss St. Maur, to rally him on his want of politeness to the present!"

But Helen was adjusting her veil and shawl, and did not or would not hear, and Fitzallan coloured and bit his lip, whilst a gentleman being announced at the moment, detained Mr. Alymer; and Fitzallan took no notice of a hint from his friend to escort her home, deterred, perhaps, by her calm, cold, parting bow. All irritation at her former conduct had long passed from his mind, but he was not one to force himself on her, unwished and unbidden.

"Are you meditating on the charms of Miss Dunotter?" inquired Alymer of Fitzallan, that same evening, as the latter was looking out on the rising moon, or the shadowy woods, or it might be on vacancy.

"Psha!" said his friend, pettishly, as if some beautiful vision had been dispelled by the question.

"Well, Fitzallan! I will not torment you with inquiries; though, as the favours, I understand, are ordered, and I have not been married 'a year and a day,' I think you might satisfy my curiosity, and trust to my sympathy. Yet, let that pass! I will not force your confidence; but since you persist in departing to-morrow, I may as well mention a report coupled with your name, which till I had proved its falsehood, vexed me!" and he told him the story of Lucy Martin, and the infamous conduct of De Roos, who by assuming his name in the north, and afterwards forging the letter, had thrown the odium of the crime on him.

"Villain! But since he could injure innocent woman, no wonder he should seek to wrong me." He was silent for some minutes, and then asked hastily if the report had been generally known and credited.

"I believe not! De Roos, from compunction or fear of detection, kept the thing tolerably secret in this neighbourhood, and it was not till very lately, on making inquiries for the poor victim, I heard she had applied to Miss St. Maur, who had provided for her."

"Then Miss St. Maur heard it, and believed it! When was this?"

"As well as I could learn, just before your return to claim the title; but my wife has undeceived her since."

"And what said she?"

"What might have been expected from her attachment to De Roos, of which you must have been aware. She questioned abruptly and sharply as to the truth, and fainted; but there were parts of her conduct then, and have been since, which have puzzled Caroline to understand."

Fitzallan lingered a moment—a sudden thought flashed across him, and without a comment he rushed out of the room.

"What is the matter with Lord Fitzallan?" inquired Caroline, as she entered the apartment a few minutes after.

"He rushed past me in the hall so quickly, as nearly to throw me down: apologised without stopping, and then dashed up the hill to Hurlestone, without a hat. What have you been saying to him?"

"Up the hill to Hurlestone! Why, surely he is not gone to clear himself to Miss St. Maur, when I told him she knew of his innocence?" And he related what had passed. "I will go and stop him."

"I begin to think you had better stay where you are," said his wife, detaining him. "It is barely possible that we wise folks may have been mistaken, and that Helen never loved De Roos."

"Then you think she loves Fitzallan?"

"It may be so."

"And Miss Dunotter!"

"Must remain Miss Dunotter still, I conclude."

The lights had long been placed in the drawing room, but their glare suited not with Helen's mood, and passing into the conservatory she reclined on a couch, drinking in the delicious perfumes around, and looking out on the pale but beautiful moonlight beyond. Thought followed thought, in quick succession, and there was a tumult in her mind, she strove in vain to control.

A hasty tread was heard approaching. Bran started from her feet, with a deep growl, to which a loud bark succeeded; and then it seemed as if he welcomed the visitor as a friend. The steps approached rapidly, and almost before she was aware a tall form stood beside her, scarcely visible in the dim light, and she heard the deep breathings of one who had spared no speed on his errand. She did not look up, but she doubted not who was beside her; and one hand was on her heart, to still its throbbing. There was a silence—for the gentleman could not but feel, as he stood before the lady, that his errand was somewhat strange—his visit abrupt and untimely—and that he had nothing but a wild, and it might be a vain hope to plead in excuse. He would have given worlds she should have spoken first, but this might not be; and urged on by the very boldness of his hope, and the long pent up ardour of his feelings, he bent over her—took her

hand, and whispered some wild and incoherent words. The hand trembled in his grasp, and she strove gently to withdraw it; but, after a slight effort, allowed it to linger in his. Then came words of deep and passionate pleading—of earnest entreaty to give but some sign that her former words had been spoken in error. After a breathless pause, the sign was given—those eyes were raised to his, though but for an instant, and then succeeded the fervent thanks of the ardent lover. Miss Dunotter was forgotten!

"Have you found the philosopher's stone?" inquired his friend, on his return. "Nothing else can excuse your mad flight, and the keeping up my sober household till past twelve. Caroline would wait no longer, and bade me tell you she was very angry; but it is of no use talking to you I see, for your thoughts are certainly not on the common affairs of this life. Am I to congratulate you on possessing the love of the only woman I know worthy of you?"

Fitzallan pressed his hand without speaking; his looks were enough to tell the truth. The story goes, that the lady's acknowledgement of error was most courteously received, and generously forgiven; that the bower with its bright tapestry of flowers was again entered; that two persons again stood on the wooded banks of that wild stream, in the same silence as before, and with the same community of thought, but with a certainty brighter than had been their hopes; again, that little boat glided down the stream, with the same happy freight, (for Bran claimed his former station,) and turned into the lake, now bright with the golden splendour of a setting sun, instead of placid in the calm light of the gentle moon; and silent, for there were none there, but Fitzallan and his Helen.

"We have had many explanations," she said, blushing, if possible, more brightly than before; "Yet we must have one more. What was the meaning of your words to Mr. De Roos, when I owed my life to you on this very spot?"

He hesitated, though her look of love and gratitude might have tempted the dumb to speak.

"Nay but I will hear," she said, with the playfulness of her former, now no longer happier days. "The story goes, that you pushed him into the water, and I have unhappily given proof I can believe untruths, though I did not believe that!" she added smiling, and turning away.

"De Roos certainly deserves no forbearance at my hands, and he must take the consequences of his falsehood. He had



seized on the boat of a poor boy, who won his livelihood by fishing, and would neither yield it or pay for its use. The boy remonstrated, and De Roos beat him. You know I am a bit of a Don Quixote, so of course interfered and rescued the lad. De Roos was angry, aimed a blow at me, and overreaching himself, fell into the water. He could not swim at that time; but land or water little mattered to me, and it cost me but slight exertion to bring him to shore. We were both young then, but I believe he never either forgave or forgot it."

"I can guess all the danger, and the generosity your modesty has concealed, but you must answer again. It always seemed to me that you had some power to control his enmity, at least its open expression."

"You are a dangerous person. Too penetrating in your observation, and too close in your questions to allow any concealment in your presence; but you will not betray him. The truth is, I have received so much injury at his hands, that I dare scarcely trust myself to speak of him, lest I should be unjust or uncharitable. My control over him was partly owing to his having had experience of my decision of character, more to its being in my power to prove a most dishonourable transaction about a horse. I can forgive him all now," he added, "that is, if you will promise never to believe aught evil of me again?"

She allowed both her hands to rest in his, gazed up in his face with a look of perfect love and confidence, and answered in her own sweet voice, firm yet low, "Never!"

"Helen! my Helen! Now have I but one wish ungratified, and in that you will partake!"

"Be not so sure of that! And this is man's content! Last night you had no wish; to-day you have one, and who shall answer for to-morrow?"

"The possession of this hand shall be my surety, fair moralist! and you will join in my wish to discover and thank my generous benefactor!"

"I will be surety for none, and the donor has been rewarded by conferring benefit."

"Can this be?" He looked earnestly at her, and she turned away.

"I see it all; this, too, I owe to you? What must you think of my blindness! How blame my want of penetration!"

"You have my best thanks for your kindness, and be not so ungallant as to rank yellow metal above my life. As to your want of penetration, you must settle that with your

## THE HEIRESS.

"Mrs. Gower, who called you nothing better than a sim-  
pleton some nine months since! I had warning she would  
betray me, or you should not have learnt my secret so easily.  
Remember I owed you much, which I then thought I could  
repay in no other way: and my agent might have baffled  
any."

"Repay, my Helen! you owed me nothing!"

"You will row to shore, my lord, if you please; your  
movements are too energetic for our frail bark, and I have no  
wish to put your gallantry again to the test."

"No, no! my Helen! you have yielded to me, rescue or no  
rescue, and we row not to shore for this hour at least. You  
shall hear my thanks, even though they wake blush upon  
blush, ay, till my lips prove bankrupts in words."

The whole county was amazed at the denouement,  
though some tried to make it appear they had seen through  
the mystery.

"What fools some people are!" said Mr. Dalton, exulting  
in his own penetration, and insisting on giving the bride  
away, though he grumbled out, "To be sure they did not  
deserve it, for they have not been much wiser than their  
neighbours, or they would not have fallen out about nothing."

Alford held up his hands in amaze, and remarked, "Well  
might you say, 'who can read a woman's heart!'"

"Who shall enlighten your stupidity, you mean," said the  
blushing Helen. "Annie Grey guessed it, though she saw less  
than any of you."

- Caroline laughed, and wondered at her own blindness,  
whilst her husband blamed her for deceiving him; and poor  
Mrs. Jones was in despair. The young approved of the  
match, and thought it romantic; the old disapproved, and  
thought it imprudent, as Miss St. Maur might have married  
higher than a ruined Baron: but, as it turned out, on exami-  
nation, that some years of prudent management would give  
that Baron a comfortable, though not a splendid income,  
they contented themselves with looking grave. Some de-  
plored the fate of poor dear Miss Dunotter, and took the li-  
berty of abusing the conduct of the gentleman; but these re-  
tracted their abuse, and looked rather foolish, when the mar-  
riage of Miss Dunotter with Mr. Hopkins, Lord Fitzallan's  
particular friend, was announced in the papers, and it was dis-  
covered that his lordship had been smoothing the way for his  
friend. Some whispered this marriage was out of pique, but  
as she afterwards made one of the guests at Fitzallan's wed-

ding, in return for his having assisted at her's, the opinion obtained no credit.

None rejoiced mores incerely than Mrs. Gower, who came over to attend both ceremonies and then coaxed Fitzallan and his bride to visit her at Florence.

"There now, Helen!" she remarked one day before the wedding, "if you had but attended to me, madcap as I am! you would have been spared months of suffering; but it is very strange! no one ever takes my advice; ministers or mothers, husbands or prudes—even Fitzallan disputed with me about his wig; and, by the by, my dear! he does not dress his hair becomingly now; he really makes quite a fright of himself."

"Fright, Harriet! what can you mean? I hate a coxcomb!"

"Oh! I cry your mercy!" said the laughing Harriet. "So, we must not even criticise my lord's shoe-tie, but hold him as 'that faultless monster which the world ne'er saw.' This is to be the union of unions, I see, and I will go and tell him how much you admire the waving of his bright locks;" and, away she ran, unheeding the calls of her friend.

A letter reached Lady Fitzallan, in town, on her return from abroad, after an absence of some months. That letter was from Alford, and entreated her to come down directly to Trevanion Castle, to help him to sooth and comfort Catharine, who, by the death of her husband's uncle, some time before, had become Lady Trevanion.

Catharine received her with the same marble cheek and tearless eye, which she had shown since the first rude shock, and which had so much alarmed her friends; but Helen at length won her to tears, and the worst fears of those who loved her were dispelled. And well might those fears have been awakened, for that had been which might have driven a firmer mind than her's to madness. She had indeed braved the tempest; but even she could not abide the shock. That firmness and energy of character which had taught her to admire the talents, the decision, and the mental strength of such a being as Percy Dormer, saved her from his contempt; but she wanted the gentleness mingled with her firmness, that might have won him from the control of passion.

She had no holy and abiding principle to govern her actions. Her very love, strong and passionate as it was, from its painful concealment and his long indifference, had acquired something of bitterness; whilst his feeling towards her

was rather gratified pride, in having won the love of such a mind unsought, than any thing akin to the pure and elevated love with which Helen had inspired him. Strong feelings ever accompany strong passions, and the thought that his hand had given death to another never passed from his mind. The world deemed him prouder, haughtier; but the outward demeanour could not heal the inward wound. It was no alleviation, that his victim had forgiven him; to a spirit like his it was rather an aggravation of misery; and that victim's look, as he fell, or grasped his hand, fainting and bleeding, was ever before him. It was to her at once understanding and soothing this feeling, almost without appearing to notice it, that Lady Catharine had been partly indebted for the offer of his hand; and could she have controlled herself, she might have turned him from these gloomy thoughts, and, in time, become a happy wife; but though she soothed for a period, as days passed away she too became impatient and irritable.

His proud spirit was wounded, not humbled; and the very intenseness of his suffering increasing the infirmity of his temper. The lady soon witnessed storms of passion, that might have alarmed one more daring than herself; but she was not a person to turn back, and furnish wonder for the world, and a triumph to Helen; so her hand was pledged at the altar, though her heart, despite her love, too well foreboded her future fate. She rushed on that fate with her eyes open; she saw the precipice, yet she dared its dangers; on her own head must rest the anguish of her lot!

Each day saw him more moody and irritable; after a while she disdained to sooth, and sought only to bear with proud and haughty coldness. Lord Trevanion died, and he possessed exalted rank, immense wealth, and—what he had valued higher than all from his very youth—political power. He took his place in the senate, as a servant of his king, as a ruler of his country; the moment for which he had panted had arrived, he rose to propose an act he had ever deemed essential to his country's welfare. Now was to be his moment of triumph. He strove to speak—hesitated—stammered—and was silent. Where was the eloquence for which he was famed? Where the overpowering arguments which were to bear down all opposition? Could he, the bold, the daring character, who had stood before the public almost from childhood,—who had looked to this moment as his triumph and his glory,—could he be daunted by the fear of scrutinising

eyes or critical remarks? the taunting cheer, or the cutting reply? No! He feared not these, but a bleeding form had risen before him, and his lips had refused to speak. What had that bleeding form to do with the matter of that speech? Nothing! nothing! but it ever rose before him, withering his powers. It was with him in the splendid pageantry of the court, in the bustle of crowds, in the deliberations of the council, in the midnight gloom of his own chamber; aye, even at the altar, it rose, and the words "Thou shalt do no murder," "thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," rang in his ears, and chilled or stayed the prayer; for there had been remorse and agony, but not repentance. He was not humbled, had not turned to the merits of a Saviour for acceptance.

With a strong effort he bade the phantom begone, and again he essayed to speak, nor was the effort vain. After a while, the current of his speech flowed fully, freely, it was like the pouring forth of a stream of molten gold interspersed with precious stones; friends and foes listened in delight; but even in the full spring-tide of his eloquence, whilst eyes were flashing and cheeks were glowing, a whisper reached him—

"Is not that the man who shot poor Euston?" asked one not many removes from a fool, of his neighbour.

These few low words, though coming from the lips of folly, could confound one of the most splendid intellects of the day. They were like the wave of an enchanter's wand. The words of the brilliant orator were hushed—the extended arm sank by the side—and, after a slight convulsive struggle, Lord Trevanion fell back into the arms of his friends.

The physicians knew not of, and therefore could not prescribe for, the heart's deep wound; but they recommended quiet, and the session being near a close, some anxious for his recovery, some jealous of his talents, urged retirement for awhile. He felt its necessity, and went to Trevanion Castle; but his proud spirit was galled by the envy and meanness of his pretended friends. Where shall a stormy spirit enjoy quiet! The same vision was before him, the same irritation was in his mind, and Catharine had more of the whirlwind and the volcano, than even her daring spirit described; she had at least no monotony of happiness to disgust or *ennuyer*.

The tempest may rage in the calm of seclusion, as well as in the turmoil of the crowd; the aliment to passion is never distant. Lord Trevanion was admired, respected, and feared, rather than loved, and that fruitful source of oppression

and crime, ill-will and injury—game and game-preserves—soon put his passions in a blaze. The ravages of the poachers became more daring. The keepers were censured in violent language, and one—irritated at the abuse—intimated that his lordship could do no better. This was sufficient, and he declared his determination of himself watching for the poachers the next night. Catharine would have dissuaded him, but she possessed no influence, and still more enraged at her hint of his unpopularity, he persisted in his design.

Unhappily, he did not watch in vain, for, towards morning, he fell in with a large party of poachers, loaded with game. The number of the depredators was double that of the guardians, and some of the former were known to be fierce and desperate men; but, contented with their success, they showed no inclination to act on the offensive. A prudent man would, under these circumstances, have allowed them to depart unmolested, and not have risked the shedding of blood; but Lord Trevanion was not a prudent man when his passions were aroused.

Was he to be braved thus in his own grounds? Never!

He called on the keepers to advance; they represented the danger of the enterprise, and hung back. Irritated beyond all forbearance, he rushed forward alone, and fired. His fire was harmless, and, without returning it, one of the poachers warned him to desist, adding, "There is enough blood on your hands already." Maddened at the taunt, he attempted to seize one of the men. The man turned round, and, as they stood face to face, their eyes glaring with deadly fury, Lord Trevanion knew, and was known by the beggar he had struck down in Hurlstone Park. The belief that that deed had deprived him of Helen, and the man's malignant look, increased his fury. He rushed upon him; the man retreated a step, and then struck his Lordship a violent blow on the temple with the butt-end of his gun, which felled him to the earth, saying, "I swore to be revenged, and it is done."

The man then deliberately followed the other poachers, and the keepers carried their insensible master back to the house. All that wealth and skill could do, was tried; Lord Trevanion's life was saved, but he was an idiot! The brilliant, the talented, the noble, was now a thing of pity or contempt. He who should have ruled in councils, swayed in senates, was now a drivelling idiot, gazing on vacancy, or sporting with a toy. And what had done all this?—the

turbulente of passion! and he was there a monument of wo, to win or warn to self-control!

It was long ere Helen left Trevanion Castle; for, though she and her Grahame wished to return to peaceful, happy Hurlestone, there was but one will between them, and that was to linger where they might sooth and console.

"You are right, Helen," he said, as their eyes met, with the same looks of love with which they had met months before, "we must not, in our own happiness, forget to sympathise with sorrow." And they did stay till Lady Trevanion herself bade them depart.

"Go, dear Helen! Hurlestone's heir should be born at Hurlestone, and I must not detain you longer amid such wo. Do you remember my playing Sibyl at Mrs. Jones's? I shudder at the thought! Thank Heaven! you are happy, and I must pray to profit by your counsels; had I heeded them sooner, this might not have been. Farewell, Lord Fitzallan, you too have been a kind and gentle friend, and I need not tell you to love Helen as she should be loved."

The following letter will explain to those whom it may interest, the after-fate of the other persons of our story.

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#### LADY FITZALLAN TO MRS. GOWER.

MY DEAR HARRIET,

Impertinent as is your request, it shall be complied with, and, for once, you shall be furnished with a full number of *La Chronique Scandaleuse*; but remember the guilt of the scandal rests with you. To begin with Alford, as I still call him frequently, who appears to be a great favourite of yours, and of whom, notwithstanding your inuendoes, Fitzallan is not jealous; for, as you used to say, he is most provokingly confident of my undivided and undivisible affection. You know Lord Marston died some months since; but perhaps you do not know, that before his death Alford had become all that a son should be, veiling his refusal to comply with unreasonable requests, under so much gentleness and playfulness, that they were scarcely felt as refusals; and listening to his long and prosy political harangues, with a patience that threatened to make me look old with wondering. He even took his seat for one of his father's boroughs, and was so much complimented on his maiden speech, that he has some idea of making a second attempt in the Upper

House; but has promised to give me notice, that I may attend. "I cannot tell you," he said, after his father's death, "with what delight I cling to the memory of his approval, now he is gone. I would not, for worlds, hear the self-reproach that would have been mine, had I persisted in my former wild and prankish conduct." He still dotes on his mother, who is at Marston, and divides his time between her and us, or I should say Annie Grey; who, having lost her aged relatives, is staying here till he receives her as his bride, from Fitzallan's hands, with his mother's warmest approbation. Lady Trevanion looked grave at the announcement, but the distressing laugh of her unhappy husband striking on her ear, the visions of ambition faded, and she gave them her best wishes for their happiness. Her conduct is worthy of the highest admiration, and I hope in time to see her cheerful, as well as resigned. Her time is divided between her husband, who knows her not, and her only child, a very fine spirited boy, giving, as far as his age will permit, a judgment, and a promise of his father's talents. I trust he will not likewise inherit his temper, or wretched fate! His mother's judicious conduct is calculated to repress such evil in his disposition, and the fearful warning is ever before him. Mr. Dalton is as kind, severe, and amusing as ever, but so much ashamed of the frequency of his visits, and the toys he brings the children, that he tries to persuade us his horse will come this way whether he will or not, and when we laugh, declares Fitzallan is a fool, and lets me govern him completely; then, in the same breath, scolds at me for submitting to such a tyrant. Besides this, he rates at us both for saying 'we' and 'us,' and vows that we go to the tailor's and milliner's, and order *en plural*. Mr. John Carleton did not die from his fall, as was fully anticipated, but his famous horse Conqueror did, to the indescribable delight of the whole county. Unhappily, there is a young Conqueror rising into horshood, which is likely, at some future time, again to frighten the county from its propriety; but, as there is already a combination to prevent its winning any race for which it may start, the sanguine are in hopes of being spared a second infliction. In consideration of his fortune Miss Manning condescended to become Mrs. John Carleton; and as she is tall and thin, daughter to a baron, and third cousin to an earl, has been presented, and spent two seasons in town, she looks more stately than the 'old Mrs. Carleton' herself; as, much to her annoyance, she is now frequently called.



Nor is this all the annoyance her daughter-in-law has given her; though to be outdone in grandeur of demeanour is no common offence. Unfortunately, she has the same talent for improvement, and having more taste and more money, the elder lady is in despair, and gets thinner and thinner every day, in endeavouring to outdo her; whilst the poor husbands are glad to get a shelter and a dinner from any commiserating neighbour; for kitchens, parlours, flower-gardens, and stables, are all, at one and the same time, in a state of desolation. Report says, that after a consultation, the father has been peremptory in refusing further funds, and in the determination that for the future, the only change shall be no change at all; and that the son attempted to do the like, but the lady towered up to such stately grandeur, and talked so much of her "father, Sir John, her cousin, the earl, and how His Majesty looked at the drawing-room," that the amazed and dazzled husband yielded the point, only pleading for the security of one little stable for the youthful Conqueror, a request which was at length graciously accorded: so the elderly lady must succumb. Poor Mrs. De Roos is just returned to her family, very ill, and nearly broken-hearted, her husband declaring he can maintain her no longer, having expended the ten thousand pounds which, from her being of age, could not be withheld from him. He openly proclaims he only married her for her supposed fortune; and his conduct has been such as to give her no cause to lament the separation. His father is dead, and he is in Paris, supporting himself by gambling; having refused Fitzallan's offer of an allowance, on condition of giving up the practice. Mrs. Alymer is as happy as ever, with two interesting children, and an attached and worthy husband. The affairs of her family are, in a great measure, retrieved, and they leave the neighbourhood shortly, Mrs. Mahon not wishing to remain where she has been known in poverty. I shall quite miss kind, active Mrs. Mahon. Mr. Johnson, unlike most people, has kept to his matrimonial declaration, and his wife is neither too domestic or too good-tempered. Mrs. Jones died soon after my wedding; and the malicious say her death was occasioned by a cold caught from crouching in the belfry to witness the ceremony. The sentimental Susan, by the recovery of an old debt, acquired a fortune of about eight thousand pounds, which she bestowed, with her fair self, a few months since on Lieut. Leontine Septimus Scraggs, a romantic Italian-looking hero, on half pay. She writes to Mrs. Johnson, from

the Lakes, that her adored Leontine "has all the sympathies and congenialities of a kindred spirit; that his love is delicate as the dewy gossamer, whilst his mind has the depth and richness of the oriental ruby." Notwithstanding the ultra-Germanism of her thoughts, and the still more ultra-unintelligibility of her language, she has many good qualities; and if my good wishes do not outrun my penetration, the good sense of her husband, and more intercourse with the world, will tame down her absurdities, and leave her one whom the outrageous sticklers for plain common sense need not blush to imitate. Here ends the chronicle, as far as others are concerned, and your penetration has, doubtless, ere this informed you that it is not all my composition, but that you owe its scandal to the Earl of Marston, who turned Fitzallan out of the room, and insisted on being dictator, malgré the attempted gravity of the gentle Annie. He would have invented something concerning Fitzallan but I was obstinate; and now you shall have, as you desired, the journal of a wife and mother. What can the wife say, but that she has no words to describe her happiness, and that every day shows her fresh virtues in the object of her love. I have been obliged to yield my absolute sovereignty over the simple people of Hurlestone, and admit Fitzallan to an equal share of their affections, or I should have been compelled to abdicate the throne entirely: even Bran debates which he shall follow. So high does his character for talents and integrity stand, that he has been requested to form one of the new Ministry; but, though friendly to them, has declined, on account of his youth and want of experience. The court once paid to the heiress of Hurlestone, is now tendered to the wife of Lord Fitzallan; and I am proud indeed of my reflected lustre. He ever takes the part of the oppressed; and some people have the impertinence to say he has acquired from me a taste for vagabonds and gipsies. Oh, what an evil world is this! Even old nurse thinks him, for a man, almost as beautiful as her Miss Helen, and worthy of her darling. Now for my nursery; though in good truth, nursery and nursery maids are things with which I might very well dispense. For what with Alford, the Aylmers, Mr. Dalton, Miss Grey, and all the people round and about, in the nursery, or with the nurse maids, is the very last place where my children are likely to be found. I remonstrate strongly, but in vain; all promise obedience, and none obey. My little Grahame is worthy a mother's love and pride; his speech is full and free, and he and Bran

entertain a particular affection for each other. Fitzallan hugs him because he is like his mother, and I caress him because he is the image of his father. Robert is a fascinating little creature, and dotes on his brother, to whom he looks up for protection, and who returns his love, and affords that protection, with the lofty air of a youthful hero. The little Helen, nurse vows, is a miniature of me, a perfect beauty; but, doting mother as of course I am, I can discover neither beauty nor resemblance in an infant of three months. Here concludes the account of the nursery department, and you must own I have been merciful. We have taken Colville Lodge for you, as you desired; and I have only to say to you, as you once said to me, "Come! come! come!" But remember, no fault with my lord's waving locks, or aught else pertaining to him, for the wife is full as touchy as was the lover. How shall I ever be sufficiently thankful for all my happiness! Fitzallan's love to you and your's, with that of

Your sincerely attached

HELEN FITZALLAN.

P. S. Do not believe one word, my dear Mrs. Gower, of what Helen says of her happiness. The truth is, she and Fitzallan quarrel like cat and dog, as the people say. I absolutely caught them the other day in the midst of a squabble, both insisting on giving up their own wills. Quarrelling for straws is nothing to this. I snatched up the pen during Helen's absence, to put you *au current de jour*, thinking it shameful you should be so deceived; but as she is now returned, and is threatening me, in a perfect fury, with her lord's rage; and talking of a libel—the house of correction—the tread mill, and what not; I must make my escape as well as I can, particularly as Miss Grey looks very grave, and refuses me her protection. But of the King, and of the Inquisition—hush!

MARSTON.

THE END.

